

Shannon
FINE MATCH FOOTBALLS FOR READERS! (See Page 9.)

The GEM

2d



TO SAVE A SCHOOLFELLOW FROM THE "SACK" MEANT THAT—

THEY FACED



"Did you or did you not see D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle, Merry?" asked Mr. Selby. At that moment Tom felt nothing but a bitter animosity against the Third Form master, and a desire to balk him of further vengeance upon his victim. His answer came sharply: "No!"

CHAPTER 1.

The Decision of the Court.

"I AM goin'!"
"No, you're not!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Sit down!"

"I refuse to sit down! I intially decline to do anythin' of the sort! I'm goin' to Mr. Selby at once!"

"Hold him!" said Blake.
There was the sound of a scuffle in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage in the School House at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, passed as they came along the passage.

They looked at the closed door of Study No. 6, beyond which the scuffle was proceeding, and grinned.

"Seems to be trouble in the family," Tom Merry remarked.

Trump, tramp, tramp!
Bump, bump!

There certainly did seem to be trouble in the Fourth Form study, and the chums of the Shell were interested. The voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in suppressed tones, was heard again:

"Welease me, you wathals!"

"Rats!"

"I am goin'!"

"No, you're not! You're staying!"
Scuffle, scuffle, scuffle!

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Bump!

Tom Merry chuckled, and knocked at the study door. But, with the scuffling that was going on inside, probably his knock was not heard—at all events, no one replied to it.

Tom Merry opened the door and looked in, with Manners and Lowther looking in over his shoulders.

A peculiar sight met their gaze. Blake, Heries, Digby, and D'Arcy, the four occupants of the study, seemed to be trying to tie themselves in a knot on the floor. Wally D'Arcy of the Third, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, was sitting in the armchair, looking on. Wally, who was usually the most cheerful and cheeky fag in the School House, was not looking so cheerful as usual now. His face was pale, and his eyes looked as if the unaccustomed tears had been there. There was a very suspicious redness about the lids.

"Hallo, what's the trouble here, my infants?" asked Tom Merry.

The heap of juniors on the floor disentangled itself, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emerged from it, panting for breath. He made a movement towards the door, and Blake, sitting breathless on the rug, yelled:

"Stop him!"

The Terrible Three barred the way. "Pway allow me to pass, deah

boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I am goin' to Mr. Selby—"
"Stop him!" gasped Blake. "He's going to ask for the sack, and we're not going to let him!"

D'Arcy made a rush to get through the doorway. But the Terrible Three stopped the way, and they grasped him, and gently pushed him back into the study. Then they turned and closed the door after him.

"No hurry!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Let's know what's the matter, and we'll decide for you whether you go to old Selby, or not. Old Selby isn't a nice man to receive visitors, you know—especially now. I've just seen him, and he looked as if he wanted to go for somebody! Better keep off the grass."

"I am goin'!"

"Rats!" said Blake, as he poked himself up. "You see, you'll get the sack from the school as sure as a gun!"

"I don't care! I—"

"But we do care!" said Tom Merry. "What would St. Jim's be like without its one-and-only Gussy? My dear chap, how should we get on if the light of your countenance was withdrawn? Think of it!"

"Pway don't wote, Tom Merry!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry. "Tell us all about it, and leave it to your uncle!"

—POWERFUL LONG ST. JIM'S STORY OF REAL HUMAN INTEREST.

DISHONOUR!

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

"I appeal to you fellows!" said D'Arcy. "I am sure, as sensible chaps, you will agree with me! Blake is an ass, and Hewies is an ass, and Digby is an ass!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, they're all asses in the study!" he agreed.

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Now, what's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry briskly.

Arthur Augustus dashed down his clothes. The scuffle on the floor did not improve them. Blake took up the tale.

"It's Wally," he said. "Wally, as usual!"

Tom Merry turned a severe glance upon the scamp of the Third.

"So you're in trouble again, Wally?"

"Yes!" grumbled Wally. "But I don't want Gussy to go to old Selby. He would only get himself into trouble without helping me."

"I regard it as my duty as your majah, Wally."

"Oh rats!" said Wally disrespectfully.

"If you say wats to me, you young wasah—"

"Don't interrupt the court," said Tom Merry. "I'm here to judge this case, and I decline to allow interruptions from the public!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Get it off your chest, Wally!" said Blake.

Wally grunted.

"It's only Selby, my rotten Form-master, again!" he said. "You know that he's always down on me, for no reason—"

"Because you're such a nice, industrious, obedient kid!" said Lowther. "Yes, we all know about that."

"Well, I only drew a figure on the blackboard," said Wally. "Chap with artistic tendencies ought to be encouraged, I think, not sat upon!"

"What kind of a figure?"

"Well, it was something like Selby," admitted Wally. "Just a picture of a man with a long, thin nose, you know, whacking a kid. Perhaps I made him rather uglier than Selby, if possible. I'm not a finished artist. It was meant as a gentle hint to Selby when he saw it, but the beast came in while I was doing it, and looked at it over my shoulder. You know the sneaking way he goes about without anybody hearing him."

"Yaas, wathah! He is a spyin' wotah!"

"I suppose he wasn't pleased with his portrait?" asked Tom Merry.

Wally grinned a little.

"Well, no. He was waxy. I expected to be licked, but the beast needn't have licked me so hard! Look at my hands!"

Wally held out his hands for inspection. They were not especially clean. They showed signs of the caning Mr. Selby had given him. The Third Form master had evidently laid it on. The Third Former's hands were red and swollen from the savage lashes of the cane, and the juniors gazed at them with disgust and anger.

Whatever Wally had done, it was

certain that no master had a right to cane him like that, and the Terrible Three understood Arthur Augustus' indignation.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "What a howling beast!"

"The cat!" said Lowther.

"Worm!" said Manners.

"It was simply awful!" said Wally.

"And then he gave me five hundred lines, and told me he'd cane me again if I didn't bring them to his study this evening. But I can't write with my hands like this. I can't hold a pen."

"The wotah!"

"You should be careful of Selby," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "He has an awfully bad digestion and an awfully bad temper. But he certainly hasn't any right to lick you like that. If the Head knew, it would mean bad trouble for Selby. Blessed if I don't half think you'd better go and show your paws to the Head!"

"I'm not going to sneak!" said Wally.

"Well, that's right; but—"

"I found my minah blubbin' in the passage," said D'Arcy, "and I brought him here to make him tell me what—"

"I wasn't!" roared Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I was just—just sniffing a bit, perhaps," said Wally. "I jolly well wasn't blubbing! No one has ever seen me blub!"

No schoolboy could have been confronted with a more vital problem—disgrace for another or dishonour for himself! But that is the question Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Tom Merry are called upon to decide—and on their answer rests the fate—expulsion or escape—of young Wally D'Arcy!

"You were blubbin'!"

"I wasn't blubbing!" yelled Wally.

The juniors clinked.

"Well, it was enough to make any fellow blub," said Tom Merry pacifically.

"I dare say it was; but I wasn't blubbing!" said Wally obstinately. "And I wasn't going to tell Gussy anything about it. I'm going to pay out old Selby somehow myself."

"I refuse to allow you to attempt anything of the sort, Wally!"

"Oh, boah!"

"You cheeky young wasah!"

"Order!" said Tom Merry, holding up his hand. "Silence in court! The question before the meeting is not whether Wally blubbed or not; the evidence seems to be contradictory on that point."

"I didn't blub!"

"Order! The question is—what is Gussy going to do?" said Tom Merry.

"He's going to stay here!" growled Blake.

"I am goin' to Mr. Selby!" said

Arthur Augustus firmly. "I am goin' to tell him that I refuse to have my minah tweated in this way, and to give my opinion of his conduct! I am goin' to point out to him that he is an utter wotah, and unworthy to have a place as mastah at St. Jim's! I am goin' to remark—"

"Great Scott! Do you think Selby will listen to all that?" demanded Monty Lowther. "You will be checked out of his study!"

"I should refuse to be checked out of his study!"

"I don't suppose your refusing would make much difference!" grinned Tom Merry. "Now, the court is going to give its decision."

"In the cires—"

"Silence in court!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"The decision of the court is that old Selby has acted in a very rascally and reprehensible way, and that he ought to be made to sit up. The court decides that all the gentlemen present shall put their heads together to make Selby sit up and feel properly sorry for himself."

"Hear, hear!"

"But the court refuses permission to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, to make an ass of himself!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Telling Selby what you think of him won't soften his hard heart or touch his conscience. He's got a specially tough conscience that can stand almost anything. No good your getting sacked from the school for checking a Form-master. There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, is therefore called upon to obey the order of the court!"

"I refuse!"

"A refusal will be considered as contempt of court, and punished accordingly. All the silk hats belonging to the said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, will be taken out and separately jumped on!"

"Hear, hear!"

"In the cires—"

"The court has decided," said Tom Merry. "We're all going to back you up, and make Selby wish he hadn't been a beast. That ought to satisfy any reasonable person. Now, Gussy, you're in the minority, and it's up to you to toe the line! This is where the noble manners of the House of Lords come in."

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Well, weally, deah boys, if you con-sidah—"

"We do!" said Blake.

"We do!" said Tom Merry.

"Vewy well. If it is agreed that Selby is to be warged, and woposably punished for his dastardly conduct, I yield the point, and I will not go to him," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Hear, hear!"

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry. "Now to hold a council of war and decide the best ways and means for making Selby sit up."

And a council of war was promptly held within the locked study.

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CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Selby Sits Up!

MR. SELBY entered his room in the School House with a frowning brow.

It was evening, and the shades of night had fallen upon the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. There was a cheerful fire burning in Mr. Selby's room, and his slippers were placed near the fender, and an armchair stood in inviting readiness.

But Mr. Selby did not cheer up at the sight of the cosy room. Mr. Selby was not a cheerful person. He was troubled with the painful complaint of indigestion, and his temper suffered in consequence.

A brisk walk round the quadrangle would have made him feel much better; but Mr. Selby was not a believer in physical exercise. Mr. Selby's nose was of a crimson hue, a proof that his indigestion was troubling him more than ever; and Wally had had another proof of it in that severe caning. Wally was not a promising pupil, and certainly he was not the most industrious or the most respectful boy in the Third Form. But

Mr. Selby's dislike of high spirits and free manners was constitutional. He disliked Wally because he was Wally, and the scamp of the Third was very frequently made to feel the weight of the Form-master's prejudice.

Mr. Selby sat down in the armchair and removed his boots, and thrust his feet into the comfortable-looking slippers.

Then he gave a start.

Instead of feeling warm and comfortable, as they looked, the slippers seemed damp, and gave his feet a sticky feeling.

The Third Form master withdrew his feet hastily from the slippers.

There was a curious squeaking sound as he did so.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Selby.

His face was a study as he looked at his feet.

They were rooking with treacle. His socks were soaked through with it, and his feet felt horrible.

The Form-master simply gasped.

Someone had paid a visit to his room and filled his slippers with treacle.

"The—the wretches!" gasped Mr. Selby. "The—those insolent young ruffians! Who has done this? But I need not inquire—it was undoubtedly D'Arcy minor!"

There were patches of treacle on the hearthrug where he had put his feet down. He jumped up, squelching treacle out of his socks. His first impulse was to rush downstairs in search of D'Arcy minor.

But he could not go downstairs in his socks, and he could not put his treacle feet into his boots. He would have to wash his feet and change his socks before he could execute his vengeance upon the scamp of the Third. There was water in the room, but Mr. Selby did not like cold water. He reached over to the bell to ring for hot water.

The electric bell was beside his fireplace. Mr. Selby pressed it with his finger and uttered a yell of agony.

"Oh! Wow! Oh!"

He had often pressed the button before, without any dire results. But there was evidently something wrong with it now. Mr. Selby had felt as if he were pressing his finger upon the business end of a tack.

He sucked his finger furiously, and then glared at the bell-push. It was thick with dried glue, and in the glue was set the end of a bent pin. There

was not more than a sixteenth of an inch in it; but it had been enough to give Mr. Selby a very unpleasant feeling in his finger when he pressed it.

The Form-master gasped with rage. "All D'Arcy minor's work!" he muttered. "I will punish him—I will punish him most severely! The young rascal!"

Mr. Selby scraped the bell-push, and removed the bent pin and most of the glue. Then he pressed the bell again.

Then he waited for the maid to come.

But the maid whose business it was to answer Mr. Selby's bell did not come. Mr. Selby waited a few minutes, and then, snorting, he pressed the bell again.

Still no reply.

"Disgraceful!" snorted Mr. Selby, when three minutes had elapsed and the maid showed no sign of putting in an appearance. "This House is managed disgracefully. I shall complain to Mr. Raiton. I hope Jane will be discharged! Probably chattering with the milkman at the back door, instead of attending to her duties. Disgraceful!"

He pressed the bell again.

But the maid did not come.

Mr. Selby, breathing fury, pressed the bell once more, and kept his finger upon it. The bell should now have been ringing continuously below stairs. If it were so ringing, certainly all the staff of the School House must have heard it. And yet the minutes elapsed and no one came.

"They are all in the plot!" shrieked Mr. Selby, beside himself. "I—I will speak to the Head; I will have them all discharged. I will—"

Words failed the angry master.

He dashed across the room, leaving a trail of treacle after him, and tore open the door and rushed into the passage. He leaned over the banisters and shouted.

"Jane!"

Two or three fellows in the lower passage looked up, surprised to hear Mr. Selby shouting for the housemaid in so excited a manner.

"Jane!" roared Mr. Selby.

"Anything the matter, sir?" called up Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes!" roared out Mr. Selby. "Call that fool—ahem!—I mean, call Jane for me, please. I want some hot water. Someone has filled my slippers with treacle!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, how rotten, sir! Can't you ring for Jane?"

"I have rung, but she must be deaf; she has not answered. I have rung twenty times!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, exaggerating a little.

"That's queer," said Kildare. "I'll call her."

Jane came up from below in answer to Kildare. Mr. Selby shrieked over the banisters to her.

"Jane! Jane!"

"Yes, sir!" said the startled Jane.

"What do you mean by not answering the bell?"

"It wasn't rung, sir!" said Jane.

"Do not utter falsehoods, woman!"

"Mr. Selby!"

"I have rung thirty or forty times!"

"The bell ain't rung, sir."

"It is false! How dare you say so, woman?" shrieked the infuriated Mr. Selby.

Jane flushed in anger.

"Don't you call me a woman, sir!" she shrieked. "I'll complain to the Head! I'm a respectable girl, I am! Don't you call me a woman! I've never

been so insulted in my life! Woman, indeed! Ho!"

"Bring me hot water, girl!" yelled Mr. Selby.

"Don't call me a girl, sir," said the indignant Jane. "I won't stand it!"

"Bring me hot water!"

"Bring it yourself!" said Jane, frowning away. "I'm not going to be insulted. Form-master or no Form-master! And I'll tell the Head so 'imself! Woman, indeed!"

And Jane flounced downstairs.

There was a loud cackle from end to end of the lower passage. The fellows there seemed to think the matter amusing. Not so Mr. Selby. He was boiling.

"The—the disgraceful huasy!" panted Mr. Selby. "I will have her discharged! I—I—"

"Perhaps there's something wrong with the bell, sir?" suggested Kildare mildly.

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Selby.

Kildare turned red. He did not like to have his suggestions characterised as nonsense, even by a Form-master. He walked away.

Mr. Selby, who could see that he would not get any hot water by means of Jane, stepped back with treacherous feet into his room. He decided to look at the bell, though he had told Kildare that his suggestion was nonsense. It occurred to him that it might have been tampered with more than he had suspected. He unscrewed the push, and glared as he saw that the wire had been cut through at the terminal. The cutting of the wire, of course, had disconnected the bell, and Mr. Selby had been pressing it for nothing. It had not rung below.

Mr. Selby panted.

"Another trick. I will make that wretched boy suffer for this!"

He decided to wash the treacle off in cold water, after all. He swamped water out of the jug into his basin and put it on the floor, and dabbed his feet into it and sponged off the treacle. Then he towelled them, and sought out socks and put them on, and got his boots on at last. Then he rushed downstairs in search of D'Arcy minor.

He was not in the least doubt as to the author of the outrages in his room. There was whispering and chucking among the fellows below as Mr. Selby came hurrying down, his gown flying in the breeze he made by his rapid passage.

"Fancy old Selby getting squiffy like this!" muttered Cutts of the Fifth. "I didn't know he was a drinker."

"Drunk as a lord!" said Knox of the Sixth, with a glance at Mr. Selby's flushed face as he flew by. "I wonder what the Head would say if he knew that Selby was squiffy, and quarrelling with the housemaids?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Mr. Selby did not hear or heed. He rushed straight to the Third Form Room, where he expected to find D'Arcy minor.

CHAPTER 3.

Rough on Wally!

WALLY was there. There was a smell of cooking in the Third Form Room. Wally and his inseparable chums, Jamieson, Gibson, and Frayne, were cooking rashers before the Form-room fire. There was a smell of cooking, and a still stronger smell of burning. The fags were too busily engaged to hear Mr. Selby rush in.

Wally seemed to have got over his late trouble, and he had been content to leave the work of vengeance in the hands of Tom Merry & Co. He was going to have tea now; he had dismissed Mr. Selby and all his works from his mind.

Mr. Selby recalled himself to the fact a mind violently.

He grasped Wally by the shoulder and swung him away from the grate.

"Hallo!" roared Wally, as the rascals tumbled into the grate. "You fathead, stop it!"

Wally was under the impression that it was a rag who was dragging him away from the fire, from a mistaken sense of humour.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Oh!" gasped Wally. "Mr. Selby?"

"What did you call me?" thundered the Form-master.

"I—I thought it was somebody else, sir."

"I do not believe you!" shouted Mr. Selby. "You intentionally addressed me with gross disrespect, D'Arcy minor."

Wally's lips set obstinately. He did not like to have his word doubted, and he very nearly made a reply that would have been much more disrespectful than what he had said already. But he restrained himself.

"And that is not all!" thundered Mr. Selby. "You have committed outrages in my room! You have filled my slippers with treacle!"

"I haven't, sir!"

"You have affixed a pin upon my bell-push—"

"I didn't!"

"And disconnected the bell!"

"I haven't touched the bell, sir!"

"This is false—false!"

Wally's eyes gleamed.

"Well, if you don't believe me, it's no good my saying anything, is it, sir?" he said.

Mr. Selby shook him.

"You young scoundrel, you are lying!"

Wally was silent.

"I am going to punish you, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Selby, in tones of concentrated rage. "Frayne, give me the cane from my desk!"

Joe Frayne hesitated.

"Do you hear, Frayne?"

Frayne reluctantly brought the cane. "Now, D'Arcy minor, hold out your hand!"

D'Arcy minor did not move.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then obey me at once!"

"I have been caned enough for today, sir," said Wally, putting his hands behind his back. "I am not going to have any more."

Mr. Selby glared at him. He could scarcely believe his ears. Had he been calmer, he would not have thought of caning the boy after the previous infliction. But he was not calm; he was very far from calm.

"Do you know what you are saying, D'Arcy minor?" he shrieked.

"Yes, sir."

"You refuse to obey me?"

"I won't be caned, sir."

"D'Arcy minor—"

Wally stood doggedly silent.

"I give you one last opportunity of obeying me, wretched boy!" said Mr. Selby hoarsely. "Will you hold out your hand?"

Wally did not stir.

Mr. Selby waited a moment—a short moment. Then he grasped Wally by the collar in his left hand, and swung him round, and thrashed him with the cane.

The lags looked on in horror. They were accustomed to displays of temper on the part of the Form-master, but they had never seen him in anything like this state before. The cane rose and fell with cruel lashes, and Wally roared with pain.

"Ow! Ow! Leave off! Leggo, you beast! Ow! Ow!"

"Let him alone, sir!" shouted Jameson, running forward. "You've no right to cane him like that! Let him alone!"

A backhander from Mr. Selby sent Jameson reeling. Then the infuriated Form-master lashed at Wally again. Wally's yells rang through the Form-room and outside it.

The door suddenly opened, and Kildare strode in.

"What's all this row?" he demanded angrily. "What—why—what are you doing, sir?"

"Don't you dare to interfere with me, Kildare!"

"Mr. Selby—"

Lash, lash!

Kildare ran forward, and seized the Form-master's wrist in a grip of iron, and wrenched the cane away from him. He tossed the cane the length of the Form-room, and then faced the panting master with a flushed and angry face.

"I don't think you know what you are doing, sir!" he said sternly. "You have no right to cane a boy like that!" Mr. Selby almost foamed.



Mr. Selby hastily withdrew his feet from the slippers, and there was a curious squeaking sound as he did so. "Good heavens!" he gasped. His feet were reeking with treacle! Someone had filled his slippers with it!

"Kildare, how dare you—how dare you!"

"I dare to interfere to save a boy from being treated brutally, sir!" said Kildare fearlessly.

"Give me that cane at once!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"I shall report this insolence to the Head, Kildare!"

"Report what you like!" said Kildare savagely. "I've a jolly good mind to report to the Head how you were using D'Arcy minor. And I will, too, if you lay a finger on him again!"

Kildare was very nearly as angry as the Form-master now. Mr. Selby's hands were clenched, and for a moment it looked as if he would hurl himself upon the captain of St. Jim's.

The fags looked on breathlessly. There wasn't a fellow in the Third who would have hesitated to give a whole term's pocket-money to see Mr. Selby handled by the athletic captain of St. Jim's.

But Mr. Selby, fortunately for himself, restrained his temper. Kildare was quite in a mood to knock him flying among the desks.

"Kildare, that boy has played tricks in my room—filled my slippers with treacle, broken my bell!"

"You have no right to cane him like that, whatever he has done."

"I—I—"

"Wally didn't do it!" said Jameson furiously. "I've been with Wally ever since last lesson, and I know he hasn't been to Mr. Selby's room. Excepting when he was in Study No. 6, I was with him all the time. He never went near Mr. Selby's room!"

"It is false!" snapped out Mr. Selby. "Kildare, you have no right to interfere here! I order you to leave this room!"

"And I refuse to obey you, sir!"

"Kildare, I shall report you!"

"Report and be hanged!" said Kildare roughly. "You have acted disgracefully! If you were not a master, I'd lay that cane about you now, yourself!"

Mr. Selby stuttered with rage. But he had sense enough left to know that he dared not carry the matter before the Head of St. Jim's. Kildare was master of the situation; and it was only left for Mr. Selby to retreat.

The Form-master, giving the Sixth Former a last furious look, stamped from the room.

Wally had sat down on a form, his head lowered in his hand. Kildare put a hand upon his shoulder, and Wally looked up with a white, strained face.

"Thank you, Kildare!" he muttered.

"Has he hurt you much?"

"Oh, yes, the brute!"

Kildare's brow knitted.

"Come with me to the Head, kid! Dr. Holmes wouldn't allow anything of the sort if he knew. Come with me; I'll see you through."

Wally shook his head.

"I don't want to speak," he said.

Kildare paused.

"Well, perhaps you're right," he said. "It's better to stand things, if you can, and not tell tales. You're a good kid!"

And Kildare slowly left the Form-room.

The fags gathered round Wally. In spite of his pluck, the scamp of the Third could not keep back tears from his eyes. He was dangerously near to "blabbing" now.

"The awful brute!" said Jameson, in a white heat of indignation. "You

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ought to have let Kildare take you to the Head, Wally."

Wally shook his head without speaking.

"We're not going to stand this!" said Curly Gibson.

Wally's eyes blazed.

"I'm not going to stand it!" he said. "I'll get even with Selby, even if they kick me out of St. Jim's for it! Don't talk to me now; I can't stand it!"

And the fags left Wally alone.

Ten minutes later the Form-room door opened again, and the Terrible Three came in.

They were grinning.

"Hallo, Wally!" said Tom Merry.

"The campaign's started!—Hallo, what's the matter with you, kid?"

Wally gave them a miserable grin.

"I suppose it was you who played the giddy goat with old Selby?" he asked.

"Yes; but—"

"He jumped to the conclusion that I had done it."

"But you could prove that you didn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You don't mean to say that he's licked you without any proof against you? Didn't you deny it?"

"He didn't believe me!"

"The rotter!"

"Then he's licked you?" asked Monty Lowther.

Wally groaned.

"It was an awful licking!" said Jameson. "Kildare came in, and chipped in, and took the cane away from Selby. Selby said he'd report him to the Head; but I'll bet he doesn't dare to do it!"

Tom Merry looked very glum.

"I'm sorry, kid," he said. "We seem to have made matters worse instead of better. Not much good going for old Selby if he's going to jump on you on suspicion every time."

"It's all right," muttered Wally. "I'll make him sorry for it."

Tom Merry looked at him uneasily. The fag's eyes had a strange gleam in them; and Tom did not like his look.

"What are you thinking of, Wally?" he asked.

D'Arcy minor was silent.

"Wally, old man, what have you got in your head? Don't do anything rash; that would only make matters worse!"

Wally did not reply. The Terrible Three left the Third Form Room with gloomy faces and worried minds. Some idea was evidently working in Wally's brain, and in his present mood he was only too likely to do something rash, which, as Tom Merry said, would only make matters worse. And the Terrible Three resolved that they would keep an eye on Wally that evening.

CHAPTER 4.

Looking After Wally!

"WALLY, dear boy—"

Wally grunted.

"Wally, old man, I trust you are not thinkin' of doin' anythin' wash?"

Another grunt.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wore a worried look.

The swell of St. Jim's had heard of his minor's second misadventure, and he had gone to look for Wally, and he had found him at last in the Third Form dormitory all alone. Wally was sitting on his bed with a white face, and very bright eyes, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, thinking. There was very little evil in Wally's nature, wild young scamp as he was; but what there was

Mr. Selby had succeeded in fanning into

a flame. There was no doubt that vengeance was in the fag's thoughts, and that he was in a reckless mood.

And Arthur Augustus was troubled. Although he generally adopted a severe mentor's attitude towards his young brother, he was really very fond of Wally, and he was very much concerned about him at the present moment. But Wally was evidently not in the mood for confidences. He only grunted in reply to the remarks of his major.

"You have been tweated wottenly, Wally," said D'Arcy sympathetically—"I know that."

"No need to tell me that," growled Wally.

"Selby is a beast!"

"He's a rotter!" said Wally.

"Yaas, wathah! But I don't want you to do anything that would get you into twouble with the Head, Wally."

Grunt!

"You must not think of payin' out a Form-master, Wally, dear boy, as you fags call it. It is necessary to grin and bear it."

Grunt!

"What are you thinking about, Wally?"

Grunt!

"Are you thinkin' of goin' for old Selby in some way?"

"Yes," said Wally tersely.

"In what way?"

Grunt!

"I wish you would confide in me, Wally, and let me advise you," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I am afraid you are goin' to get yourself into twouble."

Grunt!

There was evidently nothing to be got out of Wally, and Arthur Augustus sighed and left the dormitory.

Wally remained there alone, seated on the bed, with knitted brows and gleaming eyes, thinking bitter thoughts.

Arthur Augustus slowly made his way to Study No. 6. Blake, Herries, and Digby were doing their preparation, and it was time D'Arcy did his; but his concern for his younger brother had driven other thoughts from his mind.

"I am worried about Wally, you fellows," he said.

"You generally are," growled Blake.

"What's the matter with him now?"

"Selby has been licking him again. He thought it was Wally who did those things in his room, you know; the twaele and so forth, and licked him."

"Beast!" said Blake. "Just like him to lick Wally without asking for proof. Serve him right if Wally complained to the Head."

"Wally won't do that," said D'Arcy.

"But I'm afraid he's thinkin' of somethin' wash. Of course, Selby deserves anythin', but it's no good Wally doin' somethin' to get expelled from St. Jim's for."

"Oh, he's got too much sense for that!" said Herries.

"I weally wish I felt sure about that."

"Well, sense doesn't run in the D'Arcy family, I know," agreed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Wally will get over it," said Digby.

"He's a tough little beggar, and he'll forget about it by to-morrow."

"I trust so," said D'Arcy doubtfully.

And the swell of St. Jim's settled down to his preparation with a wrinkled brow. He could not help feeling worried about his minor.

If Arthur Augustus had seen Wally just then, he would have felt more worried still. Wally came down from the dormitory a little later, the strange gleam still in his eyes, and a bulge

under his jacket showed that he was concealing something there. He was going quietly downstairs when Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came upon him. The meeting was not by chance. Tom Merry had resolved to keep an eye on Wally, and he was doing it. The tag tried to slip by without speaking, but Tom Merry dropped a hand upon his shoulder, and he had to stop.

"Whither bound, kid?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Never mind."

"What have you got under your jacket?"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come into my study," he said.

"We've got some ripping roast chest-

nuts."

Wally shook his head.

"You like roast chestnuts, Wally."

"I don't want any now, thanks."

"Oh, come along!" said Tom Merry.

"Be clumsy, you know."

Wally granted.

"Thanks; but I can't come."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going into the quad, if you

must know," growled Wally. "Now,

let me pass."

"But what do you want out in the

quad now?" asked Tom Merry uneasily.

"It's jolly near bedtime."

"I know it is."

"Then what are you going out for?"

"Find out."

"That's what I'm trying to do," said

Tom, determined to keep good-

humoured. "I hope you're not going to

play some silly trick, Wally."

"Look here," said Wally, "I'm much

obliged to you, but I know how to look

after myself. I can mind my own busi-

ness."

"Which means that I must mind

mine, I suppose," said Tom Merry,

smiling.

"Yes," said Wally bluntly.

"But look here, kid—"

"Oh, rats!"

And Wally jerked himself away from

Tom Merry's detaining hand, and ran

downstairs.

As he ran, his jacket flapped open,

and Lowther caught a glimpse of the object that was concealed under it.

"What is the kid doing with that rope?" he asked.

"Rope!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; he's got a rope hidden under his jacket."

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"He's up to something or other," he said. "Wally hasn't been quite him-

self this evening. I say, old Selby is out of doors. You know he always

takes a walk out before bed. He is out there now."

The chums of the Shell exchanged serious glances.

"The young ass!" muttered Manners.

"He can't be thinking of going for Selby."

"Phew!" said Lowther.

"He's wild enough for anything now, I think," said Tom Merry uneasily. "I

—I think I'll just run out and see. I'll join you in the Common-room."

"Right-ho!"

Manners and Lowther continued on their way to the Common-room, and

Tom Merry hurried to the door of the School House. It was very dark in the

old quadrangle. Tom Merry looked out into the dim shadows of the elms.

There was a step beside him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined him.

The swell of St. Jim's had left his preparation unfinished.

"Lookin' for somebody, Tom Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, Wally. He's gone out into the quad."

D'Arcy started.

"What for, Tom Merry?"

"He wouldn't tell me."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry raised his hand.

"Listen!" he muttered.

From the distant black shadows of the quadrangle there came a sharp,

though faint cry, barely audible to the ears of the two juniors standing on the

steps of the School House, and yet conveying much to them.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy looked at one another with faces grown suddenly

white. They listened intently. But the sound was not repeated.

"I'm goin' to look for Wally," muttered Arthur Augustus.

He hurried down the steps, and Tom Merry hurried after him. What was

the cause of that cry in the distance? Had Wally really done something rash?

All kinds of thoughts crowded through the juniors' minds as they hurried out

into the dark.

They did not call out to Wally. If he had done something foolish they did not

want to give him away. There were thick clouds in the sky, and hardly a

glimmer of starlight in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. Beyond the radius

of light from the windows of the School House all was darkness. Across the

quadrangle glimmered the lights of the New House. But under the old elms the darkness was pitchy black.

Searching for the tag in the dark quadrangle was like looking for a

needle in a haystack.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy hurried to and fro, not daring to call for fear of

betraying Wally, and at the same time not knowing where to look for him.

And a strange, oppressive fear was at their hearts—a fear of they hardly knew what.

CHAPTER 5.

Roped In!

MR. SELBY was feeling a little better.

It was a custom of his to walk round the quadrangle in the

evening before going to bed, and as he crunched along the gravel path, the

Third Form master felt decidedly better. If he had taken more exercise his diges-

tion and his temper would both have been greatly improved.

The Third Form master was beginning to think, as he breathed in the

fresh keen air, that perhaps he had been a little hard on Wally. After all, he

had had no proof that the tag had been concerned in the outrages, as he called

them, in his room, and certainly he had punished him very severely on

suspicion.

Mr. Selby was not the kind of man to admit himself in the wrong by any

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means. But he reflected that perhaps he had gone a little too far in his just indignation, and he intended to be a little easier with Wally the next day. He was thinking so when he heard a step on the gravel path behind him, and he glanced round.

A shadow loomed up for a moment, and then disappeared. Mr. Selby frowned. Some junior out of the House, he decided, after the hour when all boys of the Lower Forms should have been indoors.

Mr. Selby immediately became the hard and stern master again, and he halted and retraced his steps a little nearer in the hope of discovering the delinquent. If it was a boy of his Form, there would be a caning for him; if a boy of another Form, Mr. Selby would report him to his Form-master. It never even occurred to Mr. Selby that it would be judicious or generous to close one eye occasionally.

"Who is that?" called out Mr. Selby. He had reached the darkest part of the path, where it ran under the shadowy old elms. He peered to and fro in the darkness, but could see nothing.

His anger began to rise. It occurred to him that the boy, whoever it was, was dogging his steps, and watching him in the darkness, for what reason he could not possibly guess.

Mr. Selby frowned. "Who is there?" he rapped out. "Answer me at once!"

The answer came—in an unexpected manner.

There was a whiz in the air, and Mr. Selby felt something settle over his head, and then over his shoulders.

It was a noose.

The rope glided down over his shoulders, and the loose rope tightened.

Mr. Selby was transfixed for a moment. He knew what had happened. He remembered having seen Buck Finn, the American junior in the Shell, giving instructions in lasso-throwing to an interested crowd of fags only that morning. Buck Finn came from the Western States, and he had been brought up to the use of the lasso, and many of the St. Jim's fellows took a keen interest in his exhibitions of its use, and some of them had practised using it.

Mr. Selby remembered it, and he felt the rope tighten about his body. Someone, with incredible audacity, had lassoed him—Mr. Selby.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Selby, in amazement and horror.

He grasped at the rope as it tightened round him.

He intended to throw it off, and then to secure the offender, and lead him into the House by his collar, there to suffer condign punishment.

But it was not quite so easy to throw off the rope.

The slip-knot had tightened, and Mr. Selby was a prisoner. As he dragged at the rope to loosen it, to throw it off over his head, there came a sharp drag upon it, and Mr. Selby rolled over on the garden path.

He gave a sharp cry.

Bump!

He was rolling on the path now, helpless in the rope. There was a scuffle of feet, and Mr. Selby felt a knee pressed into the small of his back.

His face was ground down into the gravel, and he gasped for breath. The rope was wound about his arms, and knotted again, the breathless and con-

fused Form-master hardly struggling to resist. He could not see his assailant, with his face pressed in the gravel, the knee in his back keeping him there; and, in any case, the darkness was too thick for him to have perceived the wielder of the lasso.

His first thought was that it was D'Arcy minor again. But surely a fag would never dare such an outrage. A terrifying thought came into Mr. Selby's mind that it was not a St. Jim's fellow at all, but some ruffian—some burglar—who intended to rob him.

Mr. Selby gasped painfully for breath. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and all his courage ebbed away at the thought that he might be in the hands of some sinister ruffian.

He was dragged over, and as his face was freed from the gravel he opened his mouth to cry for help. Then he gasped and spluttered.

A twisted rag was thrust into his mouth as he opened it—a rag that smelt and tasted very strongly of oil. Mr. Selby spluttered into silence. It was some rag from the bike-shed, probably, and it reeked with oil and dirt. It was jammed tightly into Mr. Selby's mouth, effectually keeping him quiet. Then he felt a length of twine being wound round his head, and tied, to keep the gag in place in his mouth.

He could not struggle now. The rope that formed the lasso was knotted round his arms, pinning them to his sides.

Who was the assailant?

He could see nothing but a dim shadow bending over him. Another twist of the rope, and it was knotted round his legs. Mr. Selby was a helpless prisoner now. Then he felt himself dragged away. He was dragged off the path, and under the thicker darkness of the elms.

The Form-master was almost frozen with fear by this time. It could not be a St. Jim's fellow who was handling him like this, surely? What dangerous ruffian was it into whose hands he had fallen?

He bumped over the ground as the captor dragged at the rope. They stopped at last. It seemed an age to the Form-master, but it was really only a minute or two. Then the dazed and dizzy tyrant of the Third felt himself jammed against the trunk of a tree, and the rope was passed round the tree and tied there.

Mr. Selby tried to speak; but the oily rag in his mouth choked back all utterances. He could only gurgle faintly, and glare.

A shadow passed before his eyes; there was a faint sound of receding footsteps, and then silence.

Mr. Selby was left alone, tied to the tree in the deep darkness under the shadowy branches of the elms. As soon as he was sure that he was alone, and that he had nothing more to fear from his assailant, he began to struggle with the rope. But it was useless.

His arms and his legs were tied tightly, and he could hardly move them, and there was no chance at all of getting the rope off. As for breaking it, that was very far beyond the strength of the Form-master. It would have defied the efforts of a strong man to break it, and Mr. Selby was not athletic.

He tried to expel the gag from his mouth; but his efforts in this direction were equally vain.

The string knotted round his head kept it in place, and he could not chew

the gag away. The mere taste and smell of it made him feel sick. As he tried to chew it, remnants of the oil and grease were pressed from the rag, and glided down his throat, and he suffered horribly.

His strength exhausted, the Form-master ceased his frantic efforts, and gave himself up to his fate.

He peered about him wildly, in the hope of rescue, but the darkness about him was unbroken, and the intervening trees shut off the lights from both the Houses of St. Jim's.

The Form-master groaned inaudibly. He was evidently intended to remain there a prisoner. He would be searched for if he was missed before bed-time, certainly, but he might not be found in that dark recess under the elms. Who would think of looking for him there?

Mr. Selby shuddered. He might have to pass the night in his present position. Probably he would have to. He thought of the night frost, of possible rain, of the cold wind, and of rheumatism, and he trembled. At that moment he would freely have forgiven his assailant as the price of release from his uncomfortable position.

He was feeling horribly upset, dizzy, and sick. Would help never come? He felt that if he was left there all night he would never survive it.

There were footsteps at last under the old elms; lights glimmered through the darkness, but Mr. Selby did not see the lights; he did not hear the footsteps or the voices.

He had fainted!

CHAPTER 6.

The Discovery!

"WALLY!" Tom Merry uttered the name suddenly as a figure dashed by him in the darkness of the quadrangle.

He caught at it, and Wally halted, panting.

In the dimness, Wally's face showed up very white, his eyes gleaming.

"Let me go—let me go!"

Tom Merry tightened his grip.

"What have you done, Wally?"

"Let me go!"

"Wally, you young ass," muttered Arthur Augustus, clapping a hand upon his minor's other shoulder, "what have you done?"

Wally panted.

"You fools, will you let me go?"

"What have you done?"

"Find out!"

"Wally, old man—"

"Will you let me go?" Wally's voice was suppressed and furious. "I mustn't be found here! It would mean the sack!"

"You've done something!"

"Don't ask questions! You'd better not know! If you want to ruin me, you've only got to keep me here!" said Wally sullenly.

Tom Merry released him.

"Cut off!" he said abruptly.

Wally vanished into the darkness.

D'Arcy looked after his brother. The juniors, from where they stood, could see the open door of the School House, with the light shining within.

"He hasn't gone in," said Arthur Augustus.

"He's gone round the House," said Tom Merry hurriedly. "He didn't want to be seen going in. He'll get in at the back somewhere."

"Yaas, I see."

"He must have done something to old Selby. Goodness knows what!"

"Tom Mewwy"—D'Arcy's voice was husky—"he—he can't have hurt him much?"

"No, no; some jape, I suppose; but enough to be sacked for."

"The awful young wotah!" groaned D'Arcy.

"Well, he was provoked," said Tom Merry. "It's no good blaming Wally. He's a reckless young ass, but Selby's brought it on himself. He's been a brute!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We must keep it dark about seeing Wally out here, Gussy. If Selby doesn't know, we've got to be careful not to give Wally away."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's get out of the quad," said Tom Merry. "It will save us trouble if we're not questioned."

"Yaas, but—"

"But what?"

"What about Selby?" faltered D'Arcy. "It's time he was in, you know. Why hasn't he come in? What has Wally done?"

Mr. Selby had indeed been an unusual time in the quadrangle—more than twice the time he usually spent upon his evening constitutional. Why had the juniors heard only one cry, and then silence? What had happened to Selby? Was it possible that Wally, in his feverish excitement and resentment, had hurt the Form-master?

"Somethin' must have happened, Tom Mewwy!" muttered D'Arcy miserably. "Mr. Selby must have some reason for not comin' in."

Tom Merry hesitated.

If anything had happened to Mr. Selby, it would be heartless not to look for him; but if the juniors allowed it to become known that they had been in the quadrangle at the time, they would be questioned, and then how were they to shield Wally?

"What's to be done, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy hopelessly. "We mustn't give Wally away. Not a word about seein' him out here."

"Not a word," said Tom Merry.

"But—but Selby—"

"We'll get in, and give Blake a hint to look round the quad," said Tom Merry. "Blake will understand that something's on, and he won't ask questions."

D'Arcy brightened up.

"Jolly good idea!" he exclaimed. "I wonder I didn't think of that. Let's get in, deah boy!"

They hurried into the School House. But their luck was out. Kildare of the Sixth met them on the threshold, and he gave them a severe glance, and signed to them to stop.

"You should not be out of the House at this time," he said. "You young rascals, I suppose you have been raiding Figgins over the New House? Is that it?"

"Oh, no!" said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, Kildare, deah boy!"

"You have been up to something, I'll be bound!" said Kildare.

"Weally, Kildare, I twust—"

"Well, cut off, and don't go out again to-night," said the captain of St. Jim's good-naturedly.

The juniors cut off gladly enough. Two or three fellows in the Hall had looked at them while Kildare was speaking to them.

They ran upstairs to Study No. 6.

"No good tryin' to keep it dark now that we were in the quad, deah boy," Arthur Augustus whispered.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. Kildare knows that. And Gore was there, too, and Cutts of the Fifth. They looked at us when Kildare stopped us. It's rotten luck!"

"But not a word about Wally, deah boy, even if we get licked."

"What ho!"

D'Arcy opened the door of Study No. 6. Blake, Herries, and Digby were gathered round the study fire, cooking and eating chestnuts. They looked round as the two juniors came in.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "There are some left! Pile in!" Then his expression changed as he looked at their faces. "What's happened?"

"Wally—"

"Oh, Wally again!" sniffed Blake. "We seem to get nothing but Wally now! You don't mean to say that Selby's been going for him again?"

"Worse than that," said Tom Merry. "What's happened?"

"I'm afraid that Wally has gone for Selby this time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Tell us about it," said Digby.

"Better not," said Tom Merry. "There will be a lot of questions asked about this bisney, I'm afraid, and you'd better not be dragged into it. But I wish one of you would go out into the quad and look round, and—"

"And what?" asked Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"And see if you can see anything of Selby."

"Hasn't he come in yet?"

"No."

"You—you don't mean to say that—that he can't come in—that Wally has—has—" Blake faltered, and did not finish.

"Goodness knows!" said Tom Merry. "We don't know any more than you do. But I think Selby ought to be looked for, if you don't mind."

Blake picked up his cap.

"We're going over to see Figgins about—about the footer match next week, or about ragging the Grammarians, or something," he said. "Come on, kids!"

And Blake hurried out of the study, with Digby and Herries at his heels. Tom Merry and D'Arcy remained in the study, anxious and miserable.

"Poor old Wally!" groaned D'Arcy. "It was Selby's fault—he drove him to it, whatever it was."

"That's true enough, Gussy. But—but what has Wally done? Good heavens, I wish Selby would come in!"

Tom Merry crossed to the study window, and opened it. From the window of Study No. 6 there was a view of the greater part of the quadrangle. Tom Merry's keen eyes caught the twinkle of a light out in the darkness of the quadrangle.

"That's Blake," he said. "He's got a torch."

"I twust they'll find him!"

"Hark!"

It was a call from the quadrangle. Tom Merry could not hear the words, but he understood the tone. Blake had made a discovery, and it had startled him.

"Oh, hai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "What is it? Can you make it out?"

"Not yet."

"Let's go down, deah boy."

"Better stay here. We don't want to be questioned. They knew we were in the quad—"

(Continued on the next page.)



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RETURN JOURNEY.

Teacher: "I see you like reading travel books, Tommy. But you are reading it backwards."

Tommy: "Yes, sir. I'm on the return journey now!"

A football has been awarded to D. Harbut, 346, Cable Street, Shadwell, London, E.L.

WORKS WELL!

Friend: "How is your new alarm clock working?"

Jones: "Oh, fine! The alarm wakes the cat, the cat wakes the parrot, the parrot wakes the dog, and the dog wakes me up!"

A football has been awarded to R. Bush, 18, Westminster Drive, West-cliff-on-Sea, Essex.

CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT.

Complaints had been numerous about the food in the lumber camp, but matters came to a head when the following note was received at headquarters from the wai of the camp:

"Sir, this morning the cheese was so stroug it walked across the table and said 'Good-morning' to the coffee. Unfortunately, the coffee was so weak it just couldn't answer!"

A football has been awarded to B. Lewis, 35, Woden Avenue, Wednesfield, Staffs.

LAIN IN ADVANCE.

Lady: "Are those eggs fresh?"

Farmer: "Yes, um'am. They wouldn't have been laid until to-morrow if I hadn't made a mistake and torn an extra leaf off the calendar!"

A football has been awarded to J. Jukes, Horn Green, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

POLITE.

Office-boy: "The editor regrets 'e is unable to make use of the enclosed contribution, for the offer of which 'e is much obliged."

Artist: "Did he really say that?"

Office-boy: "No! 'E said: 'Take this stuff away, Charlie! It gives me the shudders!'"

A football has been awarded to J. Shuter, 23, Horspath Road, Cowley, Oxford.

A SLEEPING PARTNER.

Bill: "Do you know that chap Brown?"

Bob: "Oh, yes! He sleeps beside me at history!"

A football has been awarded to A. Taggart, 62, Mayflower Street, Beersbridge Road, Belfast.

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"Look over the banisters, then."

"All right."

They looked down over the banisters into the Hall below. There was a hubbub of voices below now, and they caught sight of Mr. Selby being carried in.

D'Arcy clutched at Tom Merry's arm. "What's Wally done to him?" he murmured.

A voice came floating from below.

"He's fainted."

"That's all," whispered Tom Merry. "We shall know all about it soon."

"Oh dear!"

Blake came upstairs as Mr. Selby was carried into Mr. Railton's study below. Blake was looking pale and troubled.

"What was it?" asked D'Arcy, in a whisper.

"He was tied to a tree, gagged, and bound with a big rope—trussed up like a turkey, and couldn't move or call out, and he had fainted."

"Great Scott!"

"The rope?" murmured Tom Merry. "That was what Wally had under his coat, the young ass! There'll be a frightful row over this."

"Mum's the word," said Blake.

"Yass, waiyah!"

"Anybody know you fellows were out just now?" asked Blake.

"Yes, some of them saw us come in—Kildare, Cutts, Gore, and two or three others."

"Rotten! They'll ask you questions, and—"

"Well, we didn't see Wally do anything, after all—we can say that."

"Yass, waiyah!"

"Mind, it will mean the sack for Wally—perhaps worse, if it gets out," said Blake. "Not a whisper, whether they ask you questions or not."

"Not a syllable," said Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell returned to his own study with a clouded brow. They would ask him questions; that was certain. What could he say? He could not deny that he had seen Wally in the quadrangle if they asked him, and if he refused to answer his refusal would be as bad as speaking, for it would prove that he was keeping silent for Wally's sake; silence would be as incriminating as speaking. He could not deny that he had seen the gag there without telling a lie. It was an awkward position.

CHAPTER 7.

Before the Head!

THE School House was in a flutter of excitement.

What had happened was known all over the House in a few minutes, and it caused the most intense excitement.

It was an unprecedented happening at St. Jim's.

A Form-master lassoed in the quadrangle, tied up to a tree, and gagged with an oily rag—it was almost incredible! The School House fellows could hardly believe their ears when they heard of it. At St. Jim's even an unpopular master was always treated with outward respect, and for a fellow to lay hands upon one was quite unknown.

It was admitted that Mr. Selby was a most irritating master, continually interfering with somebody or other, and he certainly was not liked in the House. But nothing could excuse such an act of rebellion; nothing could palliate such an outrage as had been committed. Almost all the fellows agreed upon that. And if they could have found excuses

for the offender, certainly the Head would not.

The fellow who had lassoed Mr. Selby and tied him up was certain to be expelled from the school. And the probability was that he would be flogged before being "sacked."

"What mad idiot could have done it?" said Cutts of the Fifth, amid the excited crowd outside Mr. Railton's study. "Must have been a School House chap, I suppose."

"His own Form don't like him," said Gore.

"A gag couldn't have done that," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"I should think not."

"Must have been a senior to be able to handle him," said Gore. "One of the Fifth, perhaps."

Cutts sniffed.

"The Fifth haven't got anything up against Selby," he said. "He doesn't get at us. One of us might have handled old Ratcliff like that if we'd got a chance, but not Selby. It was a gag in the Third, or else some of their friends in the Lower Forms."

"Young Wally, very likely," said Gore, who had had his rubs with the scamp of the Third. "He's cool enough for anything."

"But Selby was lassoed, somebody says," remarked Kangaroo. "You're the champion lassoer, Finn. Do you know anything about it?"

Buck Finn, the American junior, shook his head.

"I guess not," he said. "I've lassoed bison and antelopes out in Arizona, but I've never roped in a Form-master yet, and don't expect to. I guess I can't enlighten you."

"Here comes the Head!"

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, came sweeping towards Mr. Railton's study. Dr. Holmes had been acquainted with what had happened, and his face was very grave and stern. There was a hush as he passed through the crowd and entered the Housemaster's study. As the door opened the curious crowd caught a glimpse of the interior and of Mr. Selby sitting in the Housemaster's armchair, looking very pale and worn.

"Looks as if he'd been through it," said Gore.

Mr. Selby did indeed look as if he had been through it, as Dr. Holmes came into the study and closed the door behind him.

"Don't trouble to rise, Mr. Selby," said the Head kindly, as the Third Form master made a movement. "I have been told that an utterly unheard-of and unprecedented outrage has taken place. Please tell me the facts yourself, if you feel able to talk."

Mr. Selby's thin lips closed in a tight line for a moment.

"I am quite able to talk, sir," he said, "and I think that the offender should be sought out and punished immediately."

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Selby. But pray tell me exactly what has happened."

"I was taking my stroll as usual in the quadrangle, sir, when I was attacked. Someone threw a loose rope over me, and I was made a prisoner before I had a chance to resist. I was, in fact, lassoed."

"Some of the juniors have been practising lassoing lately," said Mr. Railton, as the Head looked astonished. "They have been instructed by Finn of the Shell."

"I was bound hand and foot," said Mr. Selby. "The rope was wound round me and knotted. I could not move a limb."

"Did you not call for help?"

"A gag was thrust into my mouth,

and tied there—a filthy, oily rag!" said Mr. Selby, with a shudder.

"Outrageous!"

"Then I was dragged away and tied to a tree in one of the darkest places of the quadrangle."

"Unprecedented!"

"I was left there, sir, doubtless for the night, but some juniors found me—some Fourth Formers, I think. I do not know what they were doing in the quadrangle at such an hour," added Mr. Selby, as an afterthought. "That should be inquired into, as I can identify them."

The Head frowned. Mr. Selby did not seem to be troubled with any sentiments of gratitude towards the juniors who had released him from his exceedingly uncomfortable predicament. He was only thinking of identifying them in order to have them punished for being in the quadrangle at forbidden hours.

"I think we can let that pass, Mr. Selby," said the Head somewhat tartly. "The juniors should certainly have been indoors at this hour, but you might have remained out there all night if they had not found you."

"Yes, that is true," admitted Mr. Selby.

"I certainly think it would be the height of ingratitude to punish those juniors," said Mr. Railton. "They would not have been discovered out of doors if they had not betrayed themselves by releasing Mr. Selby."

"Quite so," said the Head.

Mr. Selby coloured a little at the Housemaster's tone.

"Certainly—certainly; let that pass," he said, somewhat hastily. "The person to be found and punished is the young rascal who treated me in such a manner."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "I gather that it was too dark for you to recognise him?"

"Yes; that is so."

"You think it was somebody belonging to the school?" asked the Head, hesitating.

Mr. Selby set his teeth.

"I am quite certain of that, sir," he replied.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"True, it would have been difficult for any outside person to be within the gates," he said, "and I could not think why any person outside the school should come here and commit such an outrage, unless you have some private enemy, Mr. Selby."

"Impossible, sir!"

"Then you are satisfied that it was a St. Jim's boy?"

"Quite satisfied."

"It only remains to find him, then," said the Head. "You say that you did not recognise him?"

"It was impossible to do so in the dark. That was why he attacked me at night," said the Third Form master.

"Then it will be difficult—"

"But I have a shrewd suspicion as to whom it was," said Mr. Selby. "In fact, I may say that I have no doubt at all upon the matter."

"That clears the air, then," said the Head. "Of course, we cannot act upon suspicion. In the case of such an unheard-of outrage as this, we must have the most positive proof before inflicting punishment. The offender, of course, will be publicly expelled from the school. There can be no question about that."

"I am quite sure of the person, sir."

"Then please tell me his name. The first step will be to question him, and



Kildare ran forward and seized the infuriated Form-master's wrist as he was thrashing Wally with the cane. "I don't think you know what you are doing, sir!" he said. "You have no right to cane a boy like that!" Mr. Selby almost foamed. "Kildare, how dare you—"

if he is guilty, he will probably confess."

"It is D'Arcy minor, sir." The Head raised his eyebrows. "A boy in your own Form, Mr. Selby?" "Yes."

"But surely a boy in the Third Form could not have handled you like that!" Mr. Railton exclaimed, in astonishment.

Mr. Selby coloured again. He did not like to explain that he had been terrified with all sorts of fears out there in the darkness under the trees, and that he had yielded in the most pusillanimous manner to his assailant.

"I was so taken by surprise that I had no chance to resist," he said. "And—and, in fact, when I was lassoed I fell, and—and I was very much dazed."

"Yet it seems extraordinary that a boy in the Third Form could perform such an action," said the Head. "I shall be very much surprised if it proves to be so. What motive could D'Arcy minor have had for acting in this way?"

"I had occasion to punish him to-day, sir, twice, for most outrageous offences," said Mr. Selby, his brow darkening. "He is certainly the worst boy in the School House. I was put to the greatest trouble and inconvenience by tricks played in my room, and I had to punish D'Arcy minor somewhat severely. I have not the slightest doubt that the wretched boy has done this in revenge."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"Please send for D'Arcy minor, Mr. Railton," he said. "We had better question him at once, unless we are in your way here," the Head added courteously.

"Not at all, sir." Mr. Railton stepped to the door and looked out into the passage.

"Will you fetch D'Arcy minor here, please, Cutts?" he said.

"Certainly, sir!" said the Fifth Former.

Five minutes later there was a tap at the study door, and it opened to give admission to D'Arcy minor.

Cutts closed the door again from the outside, and the scamp of the Third, with a sullen brow, stood facing the three masters.

CHAPTER 8.

The Lie!

WALLY did not look directly at the Head.

His eyes were on the floor, and he shifted uncomfortably with his feet on the carpet. There was an unusual expression upon his face. Sullenness was not a characteristic of the scamp of the Third, but Mr. Selby had succeeded in making him sullen.

Dr. Holmes fixed his eyes upon the boy with a not unkindly glance.

"I have sent for you, D'Arcy minor, in connection with what has just happened," he said. "You have heard of how Mr. Selby was found?"

"Cutts told me, sir, when he fetched

me here," said Wally. "I was going to bed."

"You knew about it before Cutts told you!" snapped Mr. Selby.

The Head made a gesture.

"Pray allow me to question the boy, Mr. Selby," he said, in a polite but very firm tone.

"Very well, sir."

"You say that Cutts told you about this, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was that the first you had heard of it?"

There was an imperceptible hesitation before the fag answered. Then his answer came sharply:

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Selby started. He had declared that D'Arcy minor was the worst boy in the School House. But that he did not really believe so was evidenced by the fact that he believed that D'Arcy would tell the truth when questioned. He was convinced that Wally had made that attack upon him, and he had not expected the fag to tell a lie.

Dr. Holmes' look became very grave now.

"Then you had no hand in the attack upon Mr. Selby, D'Arcy minor?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Where were you at the time?"

"I do not know when it happened, sir."

"It happened about half an hour ago," said Mr. Selby, looking at his watch, "as I am convinced that you know perfectly, D'Arcy minor!"

"No one is to be considered guilty

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until he is proved to be so, Mr. Selby," said the Head dryly. "Pray leave this matter in my hands."

Mr. Selby coloured, and was silent.

"Where were you half an hour ago, D'Arcy minor?" the Head resumed.

"In the dormitory, sir."

"Why? It was not bed-time."

"Mr. Selby had been licking me, sir, and I was hurt. I went to the dormitory to stay there, because I didn't want fellows to see how I looked."

The Head noted the redness of the boy's eyelids, and understood. He knew very well what a point of honour it was among the juniors not to be seen to "blub."

"Was anybody with you, D'Arcy minor?"

"No, sir."

"That is unfortunate. Of course, you must not think that I mean to doubt your word, my boy," the Head said kindly. "But this matter must be thrashed out most thoroughly. An action has been committed for which the offender will be expelled from the school! I am determined to get to the facts! You must answer all the questions that I put to you, freely and frankly!"

Wally flushed for a moment.

"Yes, sir," he said in a very low voice.

"You were, then, alone in the dormitory?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did no one see you there at all?"

"My brother came to speak to me, sir."

"Ah! At what time?"

"About half an hour ago, sir. I can't remember exactly."

"If it was exactly half an hour ago, it would prove an alibi," said Mr. Railton. "That point is important, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Yes. Half an hour ago it was half-past eight. Are you unable to say whether it was half-past eight that your brother came to the dormitory, D'Arcy minor?"

"I couldn't be sure, sir."

"D'Arcy major will perhaps be able to settle the point," said the Head. "Mr. Railton, might I ask you to go to D'Arcy and ask him? I would not have him brought here, as sympathy for his brother might—ahem—might perhaps affect his memory. I do not mean to imply that he would speak untruthfully, but it is easy to make a mistake of a few minutes."

"I will go at once, sir," said the Housemaster.

And he quitted the study.

There was silence until he returned. D'Arcy minor stood uneasy, shifting his feet every moment. Mr. Selby sat, with a hard, cold face, the Head with a troubled look. Wally's denials had not changed Mr. Selby's opinion in the least. He felt quite certain that his unseen assailant was the fag before him, and probably no weight of evidence would have shaken his certainty on that point.

Mr. Railton returned in a few minutes.

He looked very grave as he came into the study.

"Well, Mr. Railton?" said the Head.

"I have asked D'Arcy major what time he saw his brother in the Third Form dormitory," said the Housemaster quietly. "He tells me that it was some time before half-past eight."

"He is sure of that?"

"Yes. He returned to Study No. 6 afterwards to do his preparation, and

after that he heard the half-hour from the clock-tower."

"That point is settled, then," said the Head. "The outrage was committed after your brother visited you in the Third Form dormitory, D'Arcy minor?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Did anyone else come to see you there?"

"No, sir."

"You declare to me that you were in the Third Form dormitory all the time, and that you did not leave it after your brother left?"

Again an almost imperceptible hesitation. But Wally's answer came straight and clear when it did come.

"Yes, sir."

"You were not concerned in this attack upon Mr. Selby?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know who was?"

"No, sir."

"You know nothing whatever about the matter?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Selby could not restrain a gesture of impatience. The Head turned to him, with a very sombre look.

"D'Arcy minor has answered very straightforwardly, Mr. Selby. Do you still think that he was the person who attacked you?"

"Most decidedly I do, sir!" said the master of the Third. "I believe that every word he has uttered is false!"

Dr. Holmes' brow clouded.

"If he was the person who attacked you, Mr. Selby, he has certainly spoken falsely in denying it. But the investigation must be thorough. The proofs must be of the clearest before anyone is punished. All the boys in the House must be questioned as to whether D'Arcy minor was seen outside the Third Form dormitory at half-past eight, and especially as to whether he was seen in the quadrangle. As the Lower Forms have gone to bed, the investigation had better be postponed until the morning. Then every boy in the House shall be separately questioned."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Selby. "I feel sure that someone must have seen the boy, either in the passage or in the quadrangle. I have no doubt that the truth will be brought to light in the morning."

"Then for the present the matter ends here. You may return to your dormitory, D'Arcy minor."

"Thank you, sir."

Wally left the study.

His heart was as heavy as lead. All the boys in the School House were to be questioned in the morning as to whether they had seen him outside the Third Form dormitory or in the quadrangle.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had seen him outside the dormitory. Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus had seen him in the quadrangle. He was lost!

He had lied!

It was Mr. Selby's fault that he had lied. Wally was a truthful boy; there was no creature he despised so much as a liar. Mr. Selby had called him a liar when he was speaking the truth, and that insult had cut deep. The fag was in no state of mind for calm reasoning. Mr. Selby had called him a liar—well, he would lie, then. If he was to be condemned as a liar, he would be one—so far as Mr. Selby was concerned. That was how the unhappy boy had worked it out, and the blame lay not so much with him as with the suspicious and unjust man who had driven him into it.

But—but he had lied. He had

writhed inwardly with shame under the Head's kindly eyes as he lied. And now—now the lie was coming home to roost. For on the morrow, when questions were asked, he could not expect his brother and the chums of the Shell to lie as he had lied—that was out of the question.

As he made his way to the dormitory, poor Wally realised miserably enough:

"What a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive."

CHAPTER 9.

The Burden of a Lie!

TOM MERRY went to bed with the Shell; but he did not go to sleep. His thoughts were too troublesome for sleep to visit him. He knew that Wally had been called before the Head, and he wondered what had happened.

Had it all been found out? If so, Wally's career at St. Jim's was at an end—there was no doubt about that. And troublesome young scamp as Wally was, the chums of the School House all liked him, and it was miserable to think of his being dismissed in disgrace from the school.

Manners and Lowther were thinking about it, too; but they did not speak upon the subject. There was no need to let the other fellows know what they knew.

But the other fellows were curious. Gore had not forgotten seeing Tom Merry and D'Arcy come in shortly before the discovery was made in the quadrangle. And Gore wanted to know.

"Did you have a hand in tying up old Selby, Tom Merry?" he called out, after Knox, the prefect, had seen lights out and departed.

"No!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Didn't you see anything of him?"

"No."

"Well, you were out in the quad at the time," said Gore. "I know that. And I've a pretty good idea who treaded old Selby's slippers, though Wally got loked for it. I know you're up against Selby."

"Rot!" said Kangaroo. "Tom Merry wouldn't be ass enough to do a thing like this. It means the sack for the chap who did it!"

"And a flogging, too, most likely," said Dane.

"It was awfully thick, even on old Selby," remarked Bernard Glyn. "Surely young Wally couldn't have been ass enough—"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gore. "Anybody know where Wally was?"

No one answered.

"Did you see anything of him in the quad, Tom Merry?"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Tom Merry. "That means that you did, I suppose."

"Find out!"

"I don't see what you want to be so secretive for. I'm not going to tell Selby," said Gore. "Why can't you give a plain answer?"

"Go and eat cake!"

"Did you see young D'Arcy in the quad?"

"Rats!"

"Oh, shut up, Gore!" said Monty Lowther. "The less that's said about it the better. If Wally has been playing the giddy goat, no one wants to get him sacked for it. The poor kid has been through it enough lately!"

"Oh, I don't want to hurt D'Arcy

minor!" said Gore. "He's a cheeky young rotter; but I don't want to get anybody sacked. But among ourselves—"

"Least said, soonest mended," said Kangaroo.

"I don't see why Tom Merry can't say 'Yes' or 'No,'" said Tom Merry.

"And if any fellow here knows anything about the matter, I should advise him to forget it."

And Tom Merry refused to speak again.

The Shell fellows dropped off to sleep one by one; but the Terrible Three did not sleep. They were too worried about what they knew. Eleven o'clock had struck when Tom Merry sat up in bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked, in cautious tones.

"I'm not," said Lowther.

"Same here," said Manners.

Tom Merry slipped out of bed. The rest of the Shell fellows were fast asleep. The captain of the Shell began to dress himself.

"Where are you going, Tom?" asked Lowther, in a whisper.

"I'm going to see Wally."

"Won't he be asleep?"

"Not likely, considering the trouble the young ass has got himself into. I must know what he's told the Head. We're certain to have questions asked to-morrow, and we must know what to say. He was called into Railton's study, before the Head, I know; and I don't know what he's said. Of course, they've got no proof against him; and I want to tell him that he can rely on us. He must be worrying about that."

"Well, you can set his mind at rest on that point," said Manners. "Nobody's likely to give him away."

"No fear!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry slipped quietly out of the dormitory. It was not likely that D'Arcy would be asleep. He had done a thing that he would be expelled for if it could be proved against him, and that would be more than sufficient to keep him awake.

Tom Merry made his way cautiously to the Third Form dormitory.

The upper passages in the School House were quite dark; but Tom Merry could have found his way about the old building with his eyes shut. In a couple of minutes he had reached the sleeping quarters of the Third.

He opened the door softly. There was a sound of steady breathing in the Third Form dormitory. The greater part of the fags were asleep, at all events. Tom Merry stepped in.

"Wally," he said softly.

He heard a gasping sound in the darkness.

"Who's that?"

"It's I—Tom Merry."

"Oh!"

"I thought you'd be awake."

Tom Merry thought he heard a sound very like a sob in the darkness of the dormitory.

"Not likely to sleep, considering what's going to happen to-morrow," said Wally, in a low, wretched voice.

"What's going to happen to-morrow, Wally?"

"The sack for me."

Tom Merry had groped his way to D'Arcy's minor's bed and sat on the edge of it. Dimly, in the gloom of the dormitory, he made out the pale face of the unhappy fag.

"Did they find you out, Wally?"

"Not yet."

"You think that to-morrow—"

"I don't think, I know."

"Mr. Selby suspected you?"

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling!



Hullo, everybody!
"The moa is now an extinct bird," says a scientist. No moa moas.

"Practising scales helps a singer's execution," says an authority. It might hasten it.

Remember, the only way to wake up and find yourself rich to-day is to become a heavy-weight boxer.

Genes from Third Form essays: "A Norseman is a cavalry soldier." Gibson wrote that, and also: "Meteors tell you how much gas you are using." Mr. Selby "gassed," too!

"What is wrong with my sick parrot?" asks a reader. If he is still sick when you read this, you can take it he is not well.

Oh, the Editor has instituted a one-way traffic system in his sanctum—authors all go out on their necks.

How's this: "Can I put you down to attend a lecture on Buddhism?" asked the enthusiast of Dame Tuggles. "Certainly," replied the tuckshop dame, "I'm very fond of flowers."

As Jameson's signature is so bad Mr. Selby suggested he should type his name on essays. Jameson's first effort was: orNeSt jJAmfoSsoj&N? True to "type"!

Says Gore: "Nobody will believe me when I tell them the size of the fish I caught. I never saw such a fish!" Only too likely!

Story: "You look a sensible sort of chap. Lend me half-a-crown." "No, I'm just as sensible as I look."

They say Skimpole would be a good footballer if he would let his right foot know what his left is doing.

Then there was the business man who was such a stidder that he called in a carpenter when he wanted his pencil sharpened.

They say Mr. Ratcliff is revengeful. But when he has humbug he doesn't want his own back.

"You can't play cricket in the winter," writes a reader. But I've often been "stumped" in class.

As Wally D'Arcy said to Dame Tuggles: "Could you please change half-a-crown? I'll give you the half-crown on Saturday."

News: Paper as hard as wood has been invented. Just the thing for writing stiff notes.

Wait: "Steak is a shilling or one and twopence," said the waitress. "What's the difference?" asked the diner. "There's no difference in the steak," replied the waitress; "but for one and twopence you get a sharper knife." Much at "stake"! Excuse me, chops—my tea's ready!

"Yes."
"He told the Head so?"
"Yes."
"But they can't prove it, Wally."
"I'm done for. The Head asked me out straight if I'd done it, and where I was at the time."

Tom Merry caught his breath.
"What did you say, Wally?"
"Told him lies," said Wally bitterly.
"Wally!"

The fag burst into a scolding, miserable laugh.

"You're shocked at that, of course," he said.

"I am, Wally," said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't have thought you'd do it. It wasn't right to lie to the Head. It was a rotten position; but lies won't make it better. I didn't think you'd do that."

"I didn't think myself I'd do it till to-day. But old Selby called me a liar; he said everything I said was false. Well, if I'm going to be called a liar, why shouldn't I be one? If he's going to say I'm not speaking the truth, I don't see why I should take the trouble to speak it. As well have the game as the name."

Tom Merry was silent. He understood, and he was not the kind of fellow to be hard on anyone who was down. He would not have lied himself; and, in other circumstances, he knew that Wally would have "faced the music" without dreaming to shelter himself behind a falsehood. It was Mr. Selby who was responsible for this—responsible for Wally's folly in the first place, and for his falsehood in the second.

"I know it was rotten," said Wally. "It was Selby's fault; but it was rotten. But that man would turn any chap into a cad. I feel sick enough

about it, and I'm going to get what I deserve. I don't deserve anything for ragging old Selby; it serves him right. I'd do it again, too. But that whopper to the Head does stick in my throat, I'll admit. And it won't do me any good either."

"They can't prove it was you now, Wally," said Tom Merry.

"Yes they can."

"How?"

"Because they're going to question every boy in the House to-morrow morning. Every fellow's going to be asked separately whether he saw me in the quad."

"Oh!"

"Well, you and Gussy saw me in the quad, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"If you hadn't, it would have been all right. I could have lied myself out of it," said Wally, with a bitter self-contempt that was painful to hear. "I could have grown as big a liar as Levi-son or Mellish, with practice."

"Don't talk like that, Wally!"

"It's all up now," said Wally.

"They'll ask you in the morning a plain question you can't fence with. Did you see me, or didn't you? You'll have to say that you did, and that will settle me. You and Gussy will have to say you did see me, and that will get me the boot. Serve me right. Not for what I did to old Selby, mind. That wasn't so bad as what he did to me. But for telling rotten lies."

"Can't anything be done?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not unless you and Gussy start in business as liars, as I've done," said Wally.

Tom Merry almost groaned. "You don't want us to do that, Wally?"

"Of course I don't. You wouldn't if I did."

"I—I don't know." "You couldn't," said Wally. "If you did, you'd feel after it the same as I do, and I shouldn't like that. You'll have to answer, and you'll have to tell the truth. I am going to be sacked. I wonder what the pater will say when I get home?"

Wally's voice broke. "Oh, Wally, old man!" "Can't be helped," said Wally. "Get back to bed."

"I—I wish—" "There's nothing to be done; only for me to take my grief. It's old Selby's fault; but that won't help me much. Good-night!"

Tom Merry got off the bed. "I—I'll think about it, Wally," he muttered. "There may be a way yet. I don't know. I—I'll see if I can think of anything. You shan't be sacked from St. Jim's if I can help it!"

"You can't help it," said Wally. "Don't give in yet; you never know. I'll do some hard thinking; and—and I'll speak to Gussy."

Tom Merry left the Third Form dormitory, leaving a sleepless, wretched lad there, to lie awake with restless limbs and staring eyes through the long hours of darkness, waiting for the morning, and the sentence that the morning was to bring.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry's Dilemma!

TOM MERRY was down first of the Shell on the following morning. He had slept very little, and he was looking pale and troubled. He looked out for Arthur Augustus, and found that the swell of the Fourth was already down.

Arthur Augustus was in the quadrangle, walking under the trees. The elegant Fourth Former was evidently worried, and his face looked more troubled than Tom Merry's.

He nodded dolorously at the captain of the Shell.

"You're down early, Tom Mewwy," he said.

"So are you." "As a matter of fact, dear boy, I've hardly closed a blessed eye all night," said Arthur Augustus. "It's wotten."

"Same here," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"It's vewy kind of you to wowwy about my minah, dear boy," said D'Arcy gratefully. "I—I suppose there's a chance he'll come out of it all right?"

"I don't know. I saw him last night in the Third Form dorm," said Tom Merry abruptly. "I'm afraid there's some rotten trouble this morning, for all of us. The Head is going to have every boy in the School House questioned on the matter—whether he saw Wally in the quad after half-past eight last night."

D'Arcy's jaw dropped. "Oh ewombs!" he said, in dismay.

"It will come out that we were in the quad," said Tom Merry. "A lot of fellows saw us come in. Kildare spoke to us when we came in, you remember."

"I wemembah." "They'll ask whether we saw anything of him."

"And if we did—" "That settles it."

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"I don't know," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Wally might have been in the quad without touching old Selby, you know. We were there, and we didn't touch him. There's as much proof against us as against him, for that matter."

"That's not it," groaned Tom Merry. "Wally denied being in the quad at all after half-past eight."

Arthur Augustus gave a jump. "Denied it?"

"Yes." "Impossible," said D'Arcy. "He was there."

"Yes, I know he was there."

"Then how can he have denied being there?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's. It did not occur to the simple mind of Arthur Augustus for the moment that his minor had prevaricated.

"I'm afraid he lied, Gussy, old man. He told the Head he wasn't in the quad."

"What!"

"That's how it was, Gussy."

"He told you he had lied to the Head?" said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of incredulous bewilderment.

"Yes." D'Arcy seemed dazed.

"Wally—my minah—lied to the Head! Impossible!"

"He told me so."

"He must have been dreamin'," said D'Arcy, in great agitation. "Wally isn't a liar, or a funk, either. He'd take his gwoel if he had to—he wouldn't tell lies to get out of a sewape."

"It was all Selby's fault. He'd been chipping Wally about telling lies, when he hadn't done anything of the sort. And Wally was excited—he didn't think what he was doing, and he lied to the Head."

"Bai Jove! The young wottah! The awful young wascal! I'll go to him and—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "No good rubbing it in to the poor kid now, Gussy. He feels as rotten about it as anybody could feel."

"I should think he does!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I am howwibly disgusted. I shouldn't have thought that Wally was capable of it. I don't care what Selby said to him. He had no right to disgrace himself by lyin'!"

"The question now is, what's going to be done?" said Tom Merry. "When we're called upon for evidence, what are we going to say?"

"The truth, I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose so."

D'Arcy gave the Shell fellow a startled look.

"You—you wouldn't think of tellin' a whoppah to get Wally out of a sewape, Tom Mewwy?" he said, in a suppressed voice.

Tom Merry coloured.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "If Wally hadn't told a lie it would be all right—we shouldn't have known anything. We wanted to help Wally by going out to look for him,

and now we've settled the business for him. If we couldn't give evidence against him, he couldn't be proved to be the fellow who buffed Selby. But now—it's us, Gussy, who are going to get him sacked from St. Jim's!"

Arthur Augustus groaned.

"Oh, that's howwible, Tom Mewwy!"

"That's how the case stands, though."

"I—I say, couldn't we refuse to answer, dear boy?"

Tom Merry smiled faintly. "We could," he said.

"Of course, we should be licked, but I don't mind a lickin'. It isn't fair to ask you to take a lickin' for my minah, I know, but—"

"I shouldn't mind the licking, Gussy; it isn't that. But it wouldn't do Wally any good. If we refuse to answer, they'll know the reason—that we don't want to give evidence against Wally. It will prove that we saw him in the quad, and won't say so, just as bad as if we did say so."

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that."

"That's how it stands. We've either got to tell the truth, and get Wally sacked from the school, and shown up as a liar, too—or else we've got to—"

"To become liars ourselves."

Tom Merry nodded.

There was a long silence.

"That's why I was looking for you," said Tom Merry, at last. "We must decide what we are going to do. I



"Who is there?" rapped out Mr. Selby. "Answer me!" rope curled through the air and a noose settled over the F audacity, had laid

needn't pile it on about it being dishonourable and cowardly to tell lies. A liar makes me feel sick. But are we going to help Wally get kicked out of St. Jim's? That's what it amounts to."

"Oh deah, what can we do?"

"If we say we didn't see him in the quad it will save him."

"But that will be a—a—a—"

"A lie!"

"It's howwible."

"There's a difference between telling a lie for oneself and telling it to save another chap from getting done in," said Tom Merry. "It isn't quite so mean. I don't say I like the idea. But are we going to sacrifice Wally to our sense of honour? That's what it amounts to."

D'Arcy groaned again.

"I nevah was in such a howwid possh before," he said. "It would be awful for Wally to be sacked. It would cut up the patah and matah fearfully. And for me to have a hand in it—"

"It's rotten!"

Another long silence.

It was an awful dilemma.

There was no one they could ask advice of in that emergency; it was a matter that they had to settle with their own consciences. What were they to do?

It was impossible to find a satisfactory answer to that question, which had to be answered nevertheless, and in a short time.

To tell the truth, whatever followed it—that was the natural impulse. If it had been punishment to themselves that was to follow it, they would not have hesitated for a moment.

But it was not that; it was the ruin of another—another who, taking everything into consideration, had been more sinned against than sinning.

If Wally had not been accused of lying when he had told the truth, he would not in his angry indignation have lied.

The fault lay at Mr. Selby's door.

But the knowledge of that did not help the juniors now. The question remained to be answered—what were they to do?

To save Wally, at the expense of their own honour, and to feel ever afterwards that they could not look other fellows in the face?

Or to think of honour first, and self first, and let Wally go?

"What are we goin' to do, Tom Mewwy?" asked Arthur Augustus at last. "I—I don't know what to do. I—I can't tell lies, oh! chap!"

"I know."

"And you can't, either—and Wally's not your bwotah!"

"I don't know what we ought to do," said Tom Merry honestly. "Gussy, I won't undertake to advise you. I'm an than you, and I suppose I ought to say: 'Tell the truth and let everything else go hang.' But Wally is—"

"That's the wub—Wally is—"

"I don't know what to say."

A bell rang.

"That's for bwekkah," said D'Arcy. "They'll be askin' questions, aftah bwekkah. What in goodness' name are we to do, deah boy?"

Tom Merry was silent.

They walked towards the School House without speaking. They had come to no decision; they could come to none.

Kildare of the Sixth met them as they came in, and he beckoned to them to stop.

"You two fellows were in the quad last night after half-past eight," he said. "I remember the time you came in."

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Go into the Head's study immediately after breakfast. Dr. Holmes has told me to find any boys I can who were out of doors after half-past eight. It may save having to question the whole House."

"The—the Head's study?"

"Yes, after brekker."

And Kildare turned away. He did not ask any questions himself; that was very like Kildare. Perhaps he could read the trouble in their faces, and guessed what it implied. Tom Merry and D'Arcy went into the dining-room. But, needless to say, both of them made a very poor breakfast that morning.

CHAPTER 11.

Up Against It!

DR. HOLMES was in his study, when there came a timid tap at the door. Dr. Holmes raised his head; his face was very grave and quiet. There was a very unpleasant task before the Head of St. Jim's. He shrank from it; but justice had to be done. The assailant of the Third Form master had to be discovered and punished. And the Head was forcing himself to go through the disagreeable matter.

"Come in," said the Head quietly. Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the study.

Dr. Holmes nodded kindly to them.

"Kildare said you wished to see us after breakfast, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Quite so."

There was another tap at the door, and Mr. Selby came in. The Third Form master was looking very much his usual self now. He had apparently got over the effects of his very unpleasant experience of the previous evening. But his little greenish eyes were glinting with a spiteful light. His temper was very bitter that morning; he was not in a forgiving mood. Punishment hard and heavy and unsparring for the offender—that was Mr. Selby's only thought.

The Head bade Mr. Selby good-morning. Then the Form-master glanced somewhat curiously at the two pale and despondent juniors.

Dr. Holmes explained.

"I have made inquiries as to whether any boys were known to be out in the quadrangle after half-past eight last night, Mr. Selby. It appears that Merry and D'Arcy were there. This may save the unpleasant business of questioning the whole House."

"I understand, sir."

And Mr. Selby's eyes glinted again. Even Mr. Selby, suspicious as he was, would not have cared to say that Tom Merry was untruthful; the contrary was too well known.

If Tom Merry, at all events, had seen Wally in the quad, he would say so. And that would condemn the scump of the Third. He would be guilty of having lied about his whereabouts, and that would be proof positive of his guilt.

Dr. Holmes turned a kindly glance upon the juniors.

"I have a few questions to put to you, my boys," he said. "I am sure that you will answer me frankly."

"Will you allow me to speak, sir?" said D'Arcy.

"Certainly, my boy!"

"I understand that this mattah concerns my bwotah, sir?"

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

"And a great deal depends upon it, whether he is expelled from St. Jim's or not?"

"Yes, D'Arcy."

D'Arcy drew a deep breath.

"Well, sir, in the circus, it is quite fair to ask me for information on the subject, consid'win' that the chap is my bwotah, sir? Is it weally playin' the game?"

Tom Merry caught his breath, and Mr. Selby stared angrily at the junior.

The Head was silent for quite a long time. Certainly no junior of St. Jim's had ever ventured before to suggest that the Head was not "playing the game."

D'Arcy stood looking firmly and fearlessly at the Head. He felt that he

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no!" The answer came in an unexpected manner. A master's head and shoulders. Someone, with incredible him—Mrs Selby!

was in the right, and he felt that Dr. Holmes, as a "sport," ought to acknowledge it.

"You should check your insolence in the presence of the headmaster, D'Arcy," said Mr. Selby, breaking the silence with his harsh voice.

"I did not mean to be insolent, sir, and I am sure that Doctor Holmes understands that," said D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I quite understand that, D'Arcy," he said. "And I am sure that there is something in what you say. It is most unpleasant to ask you to give evidence against your brother. But you must remember that your brother has denied having been concerned in the attack upon Mr. Selby, and your evidence may clear him if he is innocent."

"D'Arcy evidently does not believe his brother to be innocent!" said Mr. Selby bitterly.

D'Arcy flushed.

"One moment," said the Head quietly. "I understand from Kildare that you two juniors came in from the quad a very short time before Mr. Selby was discovered bound to a tree."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Were you together all the time you were out of doors?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then the evidence of one will be as good as the evidence of two," said Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy, you may retire from the study and I will speak to Tom Merry only."

D'Arcy hesitated. He had not intended this—he had not wanted to put the trouble on Tom Merry's shoulders only, and the burden of a lie, if a lie was told, upon the Shell fellow.

"I—I didn't mean that, sir," he stammered. "I—I want to stand by Tom Merry."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"However, I shall ask you no questions, D'Arcy. As you were both together all the time, Merry can say all that is necessary."

"We have only Tom Merry's statement to the effect that they were together all the time, sir," hinted Mr. Selby.

Tom Merry turned crimson.

Dr. Holmes glanced at Mr. Selby with a glance that made the master of the Third feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I rely entirely upon Tom Merry's word, Mr. Selby," he said. "There is no reason whatever for suggesting that he may not have told the truth."

"But, sir—"

"I know Merry to be a thoroughly honourable boy."

"I admit that, sir; but in the circumstances of what is impending over D'Arcy minor, even a usually truthful boy might—"

"I decline to entertain the idea."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Selby, closing his lips very tightly.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He understood Wally's feelings now better than before. While he was speaking the truth, the Third Form master cast doubt upon his word. What was the use of telling the truth to a man who looked upon him as a liar?

"Now, Merry—" began the Head.

Arthur Augustus was still hesitating. He did not want to desert his chum.

"May I remain in the study, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, if you wish."

"Thank you, sir!"

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a quick glance as a hint that he had better go; but the swell of St. J's declined to budge.

see it. First and foremost in his code of honour came the firm conviction that he ought never to desert a chum.

"Now, Merry," resumed the Head, "I understand that you were in the quadrangle last night before half-past eight, and for some time afterwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why were you out of doors? You may speak freely. There is no question of punishment for any breach of House rules now. I only want to get at the facts of this matter, and other details will pass."

"I went out to see whether D'Arcy minor was there."

"You thought he was there?"

"I did not know where he was, sir, and I wanted to speak to him, and I looked for him in the quadrangle, and could not find him."

"Yaas, wathah! I was helpin' Tom Merry look for Wally, sir, and we could not find him."

The Head looked relieved.

So far, the juniors had kept within the truth. They had looked for Wally in the quadrangle, and could not find him. That was perfectly correct. It was later, and by chance, that they had seen the fag on his way back to the House. Were they called upon to mention that without being specially asked? And but for Mr. Selby the matter might have ended there. The Head seemed satisfied.

"That settles the matter, so far as these juniors are concerned, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes. "They were actually looking for D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle, and could not find him. The obvious explanation is that D'Arcy minor was, as he has declared, in the Third Form dormitory all the time, and that was the reason they could not find him in the quadrangle. The other boys shall be questioned, of course; but I am glad to say that so far the evidence upholds D'Arcy minor's statement."

"Tom Merry and D'Arcy felt utterly wretched. They had not lied; but they had not told all the truth, and they were certainly allowing the Head to deceive himself. But they thought of the unhappy fag, with the sentence of expulsion hanging over his head, and they were silent."

Mr. Selby looked disappointed. He had hoped to get convincing evidence from Tom Merry and D'Arcy, and he had got nothing. But Mr. Selby was not so easily satisfied as the Head.

"May I ask why Tom Merry and D'Arcy were looking for D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle at an hour when all boys were supposed to be in their Houses?" he asked.

"We wanted to see him, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"To speak to him."

"What about?"

"Really, Mr. Selby," interposed the Head, "I think all this is beside the purpose. No one has the right to inquire into purely private affairs of the boys."

Mr. Selby's lips tightened.

"I do not wish to pry into the boys' private affairs, sir," he said coldly. "But it appears to me that this has a bearing on the subject. These two boys must have had reason to suppose that D'Arcy minor was in the quadrangle, or they would not have looked for him there at such an unusual hour."

"What they may have supposed cannot be regarded as evidence," said the Head, somewhat sharply. "We need inquire no further here, I think."

"One word more, sir. I cannot regard Merry's answer as entirely frank. He declares that he looked for D'Arcy

minor in the quadrangle, and did not find him."

"That is correct, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Doubtless. But answer this question directly. Did you or did you not see D'Arcy minor in the quadrangle, Merry?"

It had come at last. The direct question had been asked, and a reply had to be given.

The Head was looking very impatient; evidently he did not approve of Mr. Selby's inquisitorial methods.

There was a short silence in the study.

If the Head had put that question, Tom Merry felt that he could not have given an untrue answer; but Mr. Selby was different. Nevertheless, Tom Merry felt that there was no excuse for a falsehood, whatever the motive. But there were extenuating circumstances. Mr. Selby had caused the whole trouble by injustice and cruelty; and he doubted Tom Merry's word when he was telling the truth. And the fate of a persecuted boy hung in the balance.

Tom Merry, at that moment, felt nothing but a bitter animosity against the Third Form master, and a desire to bask him of further vengeance upon his victim.

And his answer came sharply.

"No!"

It was a lie, and, wrong as it was, the blame lay more upon Mr. Selby's shoulders than upon his.

Arthur Augustus turned quite white.

Tom Merry had lied for his brother's sake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt it was up to him to stand by the pal who had done that for his sake and his brother's.

And in a clear voice he made the same answer, after Tom Merry had spoken:

"No!"

"That finishes the matter," said the Head sharply. "You may go, my boys."

The two juniors went from the study, leaving the Third Form master with a chagrined look on his face, and the Head looking very relieved.

In the passage outside, when the door was closed, the two juniors looked at one another.

"Thank you, Tom Merry, old man!" said D'Arcy huskily.

"I had to say it, Gussy," muttered the Shell fellow. "But—but you needn't have done it, too. Why couldn't you keep quiet?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I wasn't goin' to have you do it by yourself," he said. "If you could do it, I could do it—it was up to me, dear boy. But how howlible it is!"

"I couldn't have lied to the Head," said Tom Merry, in a whisper. "But—but, somehow, it didn't seem so bad with that cad Selby—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but—" Tom Merry choked.

"Oh, Gussy, I feel a frightful rotter!"

"So do I, dear boy."

"Let's get out of this."

And the two juniors hurried away.

CHAPTER 12.

More and More Lies!

MR. SELBY had been baffled so far.

But he was not finished with the matter yet.

The examination of Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had drawn blank. Now it remained to question the rest of the School House boys. No other

(Continued on page 13.)



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! It is always interesting to me to hear how readers first came to take the GEM. Usually the introduction to the old paper comes through a chum who is a reader, and I should say that the majority of you became GEM "fans" by means of personal recommendation. But very few of you could have first taken the GEM by chance, as was the case of a reader who wrote to me recently.

He was walking along a road one miserable wet day, with twopenny in his pocket to console him, when he came to a newsagent's. Displayed in the window was a bright array of periodicals, and as the reader glanced at them he had a happy thought. Why not buy a book and go home and read it? It would give him the maximum of enjoyment for his twopenny—that is, if he chose the right paper. That was his problem, and he solved it an original way. Facing the window, he shut his eyes and moved his head from side to side. Whichever paper he was looking straight at when he opened his eyes, he would buy. As it happened it was the GEM. And so he bought it, and has been enjoying its stories ever since.

Which brings me to the point that one yarn which he and all other readers will greatly enjoy is next week's. It bears the title of:

"THE CONVICT-HUNTERS!"

A convict escapes from Blackmoor Prison and goes into hiding near St. Jim's. He is a desperate and dangerous character, for whose capture a hundred pounds reward is offered. All boys are forbidden by the Head to leave the school precincts, but Tom Merry & Co. take the view that the sooner the convict is run to earth, the better for their freedom. So, acting against the Head's fiat, they add their numbers to the wardens and police searching the countryside. Then they discover that Gerald Cutts, the black sheep of the Fifth is also in the hunt. From then on the juniors find the senior working against them, which leads to many exciting and mysterious situations in the search for Convict No. 101. Here is a story that has all the ingredients essential to a first-class yarn—thrills, drama, mystery, and suspense, and you will enjoy every word of "The Convict-Hunters!" Look out for it.

"THE BOY WHO BROKE BOUNDS!"

Gated for every half-holiday of the term! That is the outcome of Arthur Edward Lovell's attempt to discover where the captured Mr. Poggers has hidden the Head's notecase—an attempt

which only resulted in the thief escaping! But it's just like Arthur Edward to think that he's not to blame, and he is in a resentful frame of mind when the next half-holiday comes round. He is jolly well going out and chance it! What happens when Lovell breaks bounds makes an exciting story that you will vote the best of the series so far. With the Jester's selection of readers' prize jokes, and more of Monty Lowther's fun, it completes this splendid programme. If you haven't a standing order for the GEM, don't forget to book your copy in advance.

A MARATHON MATCH!

Whenever Cup-ties are mentioned—and there will be a great deal of talk about them this week, for the Fifth Round will be played on Saturday—there is one particular match which is invariably brought into the discussion. It was the longest Cup-tie ever played, and lasted no less than nine and a half hours! The two teams concerned in this marathon match were Barrow and Gillingham, and it was in the last Qualifying Round of the 1924-5 Cup Competition.

In the first game, played at Barrow, the two teams drew 0-0. The replay took place at Gillingham, and again a draw resulted, after extra time. A third game was played on a neutral ground, but still neither team could force home an advantage. For the fourth time they met, and when the final whistle blew after extra time, the result was still a draw! For seven and a half hours Gillingham and Barrow had battled against each other, and still they were no nearer the solution as to which club was to enter the First Round—now known as the Third Round. So the two teams got to grips again, and at last the long Cup-tie was decided—though extra time had to be played again before Barrow won 2-1! They had struggled for half-hour more than six ordinary games!

DREW SIX CUP-TIES!

There are other cases where teams have met three or four times in a Cup game before a decisive result was obtained, but no team has ever equalled the experience of Alloa, in the 1921 Scottish Cup. They were opposed to Falkirk in the First Round, and four games had to be played before they won. In the Second Round Alloa were

drawn against Clydebank, and once more it was a long-drawn-out affair. Three times the two teams met, Alloa eventually winning. The latter had played seven Cup games to reach the Third Round! Next they had to play Glasgow Rangers at Ibrox Park. But the men of Alloa were undaunted by their doughty opponents—and drew yet another Cup-tie. By arrangement, the replay took place on the Rangers' ground again, and at last, after nine Cup games, Alloa made their exit from the competition.

TAKEN FOR A RIDE!

We often hear of foolish people stealing motor-cars for a joy-ride, but not many would have the "nerve" to steal a railway engine for that purpose. But this happened recently in Mattoon, Illinois. An engine with steam up was standing unattended when a man jumped up into the cab, released the brakes, and opened the throttle. Quickly gathering speed, the loco clung away down the line, to the consternation of the driver and fireman. The news was quickly phoned to the nearest signal-box. But by that time the engine had clattered over five sets of points and was already on the main line, where there was another loco ahead.

Seeing the stolen engine rushing towards them, the driver and fireman jumped for their lives. Then, with a terrific crash, the runaway cannoned into the other loco, and no little damage was done. Luckily for the joy-rider he escaped injury, but he didn't escape punishment. His foolish freak cost the railway company four hundred pounds—and he went to gaol for a spell.

THE LOST TRAM!

Amazing things happen in the U.S.A., but the story of the tramcar that was lost takes some beating. The driver of a one-man tram in Minneapolis was switched on to the wrong lines, and it was a route unfamiliar to him. Thinking he would eventually come back to his own route, he drove on. For half an hour the lost tram travelled round and round, and still the driver hadn't the faintest idea where he was heading. There were over fifty passengers on the tram, and at last they got fed-up with the endless journey. The driver had to admit what had happened—that he was lost! The passengers promptly deserted the tram, to find their way home themselves. The driver drove on until he came to a tram-shed, and having had enough of being lost, he left the tram there, to be called for the next day, when he had got his bearings!

TAKE A TIP

and get this week's Grand Double Free Gift issue of the "Magnet," which contains MAGIC SPECTACLES and a set of pictures. To look through the magic spectacles and see the pictures come to life is a fascinating experience. The "Magnet" is now on sale at all newsagents—usual price, 2d.

TAILPIECE.

Man (entering grocer's shop): "I want all that rotten eggs you have!"

Assistant: "Ah, are you going to see the new comedian at the theatre to-night?"

Man: "Keep it dark—I am the comedian!"

THE EDITOR.

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PEN PALS COUPON

15-2-36

boys of the School House, it appeared, had been out of the House at that special time; but there was one chance left of convicting the culprit. D'Arcy minor had declared that he had not been outside the Third Form dormitory. Even if he had not been seen in the quadrangle, he might have been seen outside the dormitory, if he had left it, as Mr. Selby firmly believed that he had. And if he had been seen outside the dormitory, he would be convicted of having lied, and Mr. Selby's accusation would be made good.

And so the School House boys were questioned.

There were only two who looked forward to the questioning with uneasiness. These were Manners and Lowther.

Tom Merry's two chums had met D'Arcy minor on the stairs when he was going out into the quadrangle, and they had seen the rope concealed under his jacket—the rope which Mr. Selby had been tied up with.

Manners and Lowther would be questioned with the rest. And what were they to say? The two juniors dismissed the matter. Tom Merry had not said a word of what had passed in the Head's study—he could not. But D'Arcy had explained to the chums of the Shell. Lowther and Manners had gone up to their study to talk it over, and they were discussing it when Tom Merry came in.

Lessons were being delayed that morning, so far as the School House fellows were concerned. The New House boys were already in the Form-rooms.

Manners and Lowther looked at Tom Merry as he came in.

Tom Merry avoided their eyes. "Don't look so cat up about it, Tom," said Lowther, in a low voice. "It—it couldn't be helped!"

"You had to stand by Wally," said Manners.

Tom Merry smiled bitterly.

"It's good of you chaps to talk like that," he said. "But you know as well as I do that I've acted like a cad."

"Oh rot!" said Lowther uneasily. "It was all old Selby's fault—hang him!"

"I wouldn't have said it to the Head," muttered Tom Merry. "But—hot Selby—I couldn't let that cad get the upper hand of Wally!"

"Of course you couldn't," said Manners, but not very heartily. "It was a rotten position, Tom. We should have done the same."

"Would you?"

"Well, I—I suppose so. It's hard for a fellow to know what he would do without going through the same thing; but—but I think so."

"I'm sure of it!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry did not reply. He knew that his chums were trying to reassure and comfort him, but it was not much use.

"The question is—what are we going to say?" said Manners, after a pause. "They're beginning the dashed inquisition already. We shall be called down to be questioned in a few minutes, if we don't show up. And they're going to ask if we saw Wally outside the Third Form dormitory at that time. Well, we—we—"

"We did see him," said Lowther.

"Exactly!"

"And—and if we say so, it undoes all you've done, Tom."

"The young ass has fairly put his foot in it!" groaned Manners. "What we have to say will be as bad for him as what you've said, if—if—"

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"If I'd told the truth," said Tom Merry grimly.

"What's going to be done?" said Lowther wretchedly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I can't advise you," he said. "If I did, I should say, tell the truth, and don't do as I've done."

"But Wally?"

"Then Wally will have to take his chance."

"But—but you, too," said Lowther hesitating. "If we answer all that Selby asks us it will come out that you were with us and saw Wally—and saw him go into the quad. It will show you up as having—having—"

"Lied!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, won't it?"

"Yes. Selby will ask you everything he can think of. If you saw Wally—if you saw where he went—if I was with you and saw where he went. He won't leave a single loophole. It will all come out," said Tom Merry.

"And we shall show you up?"

"We're not going to do that," said Lowther quietly.

"You can't help it."

"Yes, we can, if—"

"If you do as I've done?"

"Yes."

"You can't," said Tom Merry. "I won't have you dragged into it; it's bad enough for me."

Manners and Lowther were silent.

It was said of old that one he makes many. Wally's falsehood in the first place had called forth more, and now these were calling forth more in their turn. Where was it to end? What a network of lies was growing out of the one first lie! It seemed to the juniors, usually so honourable and straightforward, that they were surrounded by an atmosphere of prevarication and deceit from which there was no escape.

The study door opened suddenly without a knock, and the Third Form master came in.

The Terrible Three fixed their eyes upon Mr. Selby. All the masters at St. Jim's knocked at a door before entering even a junior study, excepting Mr. Selby. But Mr. Selby did not waste courtesy upon juniors, and that fact alone was sufficient to put their backs up. The Form-master's expression was very disagreeable.

"I presume you know that the School House boys are now being questioned with regard to D'Arcy minor?" he said harshly.

"Yes, sir," said Lowther.

"Why are you not downstairs with the rest?"

"Because we're here, sir," said Manners.

"Don't be impertinent, Manners. I thought I should find you here, and I have some very special questions to put to you," said Mr. Selby.

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, indeed!" snapped Mr. Selby. "Merry has stated that he did not see D'Arcy minor last night, and I do not believe him."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"As you three are always together you probably know as much of the matter as Tom Merry does," pursued Mr. Selby.

"Probably, sir," assented Lowther.

"Where were you at half-past eight last night?"

Lowther reflected.

"In the Common-room, sir, or else going there," he said. "I didn't notice the time specially, sir. You see, a chap can't foresee these happenings; but on future occasions, if you like, sir, I will

look at my watch every few minutes during the day and night so as to be able to account for all my movements."

Mr. Selby frowned.

"You are impertinent, Lowther."

"I only want to be obliging, sir."

"Was Tom Merry with you at half-past eight?"

"About that time, sir. Couldn't say within a quarter of an hour or so."

"Were you in the quadrangle with him?"

"No, sir."

"Excepting when he was in the quadrangle, were you with him?"

"Most of the time, sir."

"You cannot give me an exact answer, I perceive, Lowther."

"That's owing to my not being able to foresee future events, sir," said Lowther with an air of great simplicity.

"If I happened to be a prophet, sir, or a fortune-teller, I should know when these things were going to happen, and then I'd make a special note of the time, and—"

"Take a hundred lines for impertinence, Lowther."

"Thank you, sir," said Monty imperturbably.

"Did you, or did you not, see D'Arcy minor outside the Third Form dormitory at that time last night, and was or was not Merry with you?" asked Mr. Selby categorically.

"No, sir," said Monty Lowther, without hesitation.

"And you, Manners?"

"No, sir."

It was to save their chums, and Manners and Lowther joined the ranks of the liars without even stopping to think.

Mr. Selby's look was very bitter.

"I do not believe you," he said.

The chums of the Shell made no reply to that.

Mr. Selby, with bitter disappointment and chagrin in his face, quitted the study. There was a long silence after he had gone.

"Well," said Lowther at last, "we're all in the same boat now—giddy liars, all of us! I believe that man would have made a liar of George Washington if he could have got at him. No good crying over spilt milk, you chaps, or looking down in the mouth. We must try to forget all about it if we can."

CHAPTER 13.

Remorse!

THE mystery of the attack upon Mr. Selby remained a mystery. All the School House fellows had been questioned, and the result had been nil.

No information was forthcoming from any quarter.

Mr. Selby was forced to give up the hope that the culprit would be discovered and punished.

He remained firmly convinced in his own mind that it was D'Arcy minor.

But his conviction on that point counted for nothing. Before a fellow could be expelled from the school the proof against him had to be of the clearest, and there was no proof whatever against Wally, thanks to the peculiar methods of his friends in shielding him.

The Head declined to listen to mere suspicion on the subject.

Mr. Selby could not say that he had recognised his assailant. And Wally's statement that he was in the Third Form dormitory at the time could not be disproved, and was probable enough in itself. He had been seen there just before the outrage; and he had not been

seen outside, so far as was known. It was only fair to give Wally the benefit of the doubt.

That the Head did, much to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Selby.

Wally had escaped. But he was not happy.

He had spoken falsely, and he had caused others to do the same. Mr. Selby would have been astonished if he had known how much that worried the scamp of the Third.

Wally, who was not in the least sorry for the way he had handled his Form-master, was suffering from remorse for having told a lie about it, and his remorse hurt him more than a flogging would have done.

Jaimeson, Gibson, and Frayne, his chums in the Third, knew very well that he had done what Mr. Selby accused him of. He had not told them, but they knew it, and they knew, therefore, that he had lied to the Head.

They did not tell him, but Wally was growing morbidly self-conscious on the subject, and he felt that they regarded him as a liar.

He became very touchy and irritable, especially suspicious that fellows did not take his word.

And while Wally was worried and miserable, there were clouded faces in the Fourth and Shell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had lost his cheerfulness, and Tom Merry's sunny smile seemed to have vanished for ever. Manners and Lowther, too, were worried looks.

Lowther had recommended that they should forget about the whole matter. But he could not follow his own advice. The chums of the School House could not help thinking about it.

In the two or three days after the occurrence it remained a burden upon their minds. They did not speak about it much, but it was always in their thoughts.

They avoided Wally, and they began to some extent to avoid one another. Fellows who knew one another to be liars felt their mutual trust and confidence shaken. And the unhappy juniors had a miserable feeling that sooner or later they would be shown up and that they deserved to be. For there is no end to a lie; until confessed, it calls for new lies to bolster it up and avert discovery.

They had not realised it at first, but they realised it now.

Tom Merry had always held his head high among his schoolfellows. Fellows like Levison, Mellish, and Crooke he had always heartily despised. But he felt miserable that he had sunk to their level now, and, what was worse, they knew it! Levison's manner towards the captain of the Shell had already become different. To Tom Merry's eyes, it seemed as if the cad of the Fourth was assuming a familiarity, as with a fellow after his own heart—one of his own sort.

Levison of the Fourth had no conscientious scruples on these points. He did not believe that anybody had, and he had always regarded Tom Merry's views as a kind of skilful hypocrisy.

And he was not slow to say so.

A few days after the affair of Mr. Selby, when Tom Merry came out of the Shell Form Room after morning lessons, he found a group of Fourth Formers in the passage. Jack Blake was giving Levison his opinion of him in the plainest of plain English, and Levison was listening to it with his usual critical grin.

"Hallo, what's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"It's Levison. He set a cracker in Mr. Latham's desk, and there was a row. And he stood up and denied knowing anything about it, telling lies like clockwork. I was jolly near to giving him away."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I suppose I wasn't called upon to take a licking, was I?" said Levison savagely.

"Yes, you were, rather than tell barefaced lies," said Blake. "It was simply sickening. Any decent fellow would have stood a licking rather than do what you did. You're a disgrace to the House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'm not the only disgrace to the House, if you come to that."

Blake clenched his hands.

"If you mean that I'd have done it, Levison, you'd better say so, and I'll wipe up the floor with you!" he exclaimed.

"I didn't refer to you. There are other fellows here who can tell lies on occasion, and roll 'em out to order," said Levison. "Fellows who hold their blessed noses very high, too, and pretend to look down on that sort of thing."

Tom Merry felt a strange sensation at his heart.

D'Arcy changed colour.

Levison was looking at them, with a bitter sneer upon his face. Several fellows saw his look, and understood it, and looked surprised.

"What do you mean?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell. "I'll bet there isn't such a giddy fabricator as you are, Levison, unless it's Mellish."

"I know what I mean," said Levison, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, we want to know what you mean, too," said the Cornstalk junior. "You're accusing somebody, and you'd better speak out."

"Oh, I don't want to do that!"

"No, you never want to speak out," said Noble scornfully. "But you're going to now, or else take a thick ear. Whom are you speaking of?"

"Well, Tom Merry's one."

"Rot!"

"Rats!"

"Don't be an ass!"

Levison sneered.

"Punch his head, Tommy!" said

Bernard Glynn.

"Wipe up the floor with the cad! I'll hold your jacket!"

Tom Merry did not move. The juniors crowded round, looking at him, amazed by the pallor and misery in his face.

Kangaroo nudged him.

"Did you hear what Levison said, Tom Merry?"

"Yaas," said Tom, in a low voice.

"Well, why don't you lift the cad?" demanded the Cornstalk. "I suppose you're not going to let a worm like Levison call you a liar, are you?"

"He can say what he likes."

"Eh?"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Don't be an ass. Wallop him!"

Tom Merry shook his head and walked away. Kangaroo gave a low whistle. The other fellows looked surprised and uncomfortable.

Levison burst into a sneering laugh. "Well, what do you say now?" he asked. "Tom Merry doesn't deny it, He can't. It's true."

"You wottah, Levison!"

"And you're another," said Levison at once. "You're as big a liar as Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus Adolphus D'Arcy! You can tell lies as well as anybody else when it's a question of getting your minor out of a scrape."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's face was crimson.

"Oh, that's lies, Levison, and you know it is!" said Kangaroo. "Gussy simply couldn't do it if he tried."

"Rather not," said Clifton Dane. "Shut up, Levison! I don't know why Tom Merry's let you off; but I'm fed-up with you, for one. If you say another word, I'll wallop you!"

"I'll say what I like! I—"

Bump!

Levison descended upon the floor and roared, and the juniors walked away and left him there.

Tom Merry had gone to his study. He threw himself into a chair, with his face buried in his hands. What he was suffering at that moment was worse than anything he had hitherto experienced in his young life.

What had he done?

He had saved Wally, and had placed it in the power of a cad and a rank outsider like Levison to insult him as much as he chose. He could have licked Levison, true, but that would have been of little use. What Levison had said was true. He had lied, and Levison knew that he had. He had no right to touch the cad of the Fourth for saying what was true, and it would have been no comfort to him to lick Levison. That would not have removed the bitter sting of the insulting words. The insult hurt him, because he had no defence against it—it was true.

The study door opened, and Tom Merry did not look up; he did not hear. It closed again. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the study. He touched Tom Merry lightly on the shoulder.

(Continued on the next page.)

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The Shell fellow looked up into a face as miserable as his own.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

D'Arcy paused.

"Well?"

"What's going to be done?"

"Nothing."

"We—we can't stand that kind of thing."

"We've got to," said Tom Merry bitterly. "Lovison is in the right; he's a cad, but he's in the right this time. We're liars, and he knows it!"

D'Arcy winced.

"I—I've thought of somethin', Tom Mewwy. It—it's been wowwyin' me frightfully evah since. We—we could wipe it out one way, you know."

"I don't see how."

"By confessing to the Head."

"And giving Wally away."

D'Arcy gave a kind of groan.

"I suppose that would be bound to follow, Tom Mewwy."

"It would be quite certain."

"What's to be done?"

"Nothing. We've got to grin and bear it," said Tom Merry. "I—I wish I could get out of St. Jan's. I feel as if I can't look the fellows in the face. I feel rotten—rotten!"

"Same here, deah boy. I nevah felt so wotten in my life," said D'Arcy.

"I—I think that somethin' will have to be done. I shall speak to Wally."

"Don't ask the kid to give himself away," said Tom Merry hastily.

"That wouldn't be fair play. We got into this with our eyes open, and it would make matters worse than ever to go back on Wally now."

"But—but how can we stand this?"

"We've got to."

They had to, but it was a dreary prospect. The lies that had been told had come home to roost, and it seemed as if they were destined to shadow always the lives of the unhappy juniors.

CHAPTER 14.

The Only Way!

"WALLY, old man!"

Jameson of the Third tapped his chum on the shoulder.

Wally did not reply. He was sitting on the end of the fender in the Form-room, staring hard into the fire.

Jameson shook his chum by the arm.

"Wally!"

The fag looked up at last.

"What is it?" he asked miserably and irritably.

"Don't mope here like this," said Jameson. "You've been like a giddy boiled owl the last two or three days. Come down to the tuckshop with us."

Wally shook his head.

"Oh, do come!" said Jameson persuasively. "Curly's got a postal order, and we're going to blow it. We want you to help us."

"I can't come."

"Oh, rot! You can if you like."

Wally flushed.

"Can't you take my word?" he demanded.

"Don't be so jolly touchy, Wally. Of course I can," said Jameson. "But I—"

"Well, then, leave me alone."

"Well, I must say you're a ripping fellow to chum with—I don't think!" said Jameson, in disgust. "About as cheerful as an undertaker's mate, aren't you?"

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"Oh, rats!"

Jameson snorted, and left the fag alone. Wally remained staring into the fire. The fag was thinking things out. He had been doing some very hard thinking for the last day or two.

The subject of his reflections was, of course, the troublesome Selby affair. Wally had come to the conclusion that the present situation was intolerable. He felt that he could not stand it any longer.

"It's too rotten," muttered Wally, when he was alone. "Jameson and Curly are very decent about it, but they must think me a rotter. And poor old Gussy, and Tom Merry. I know what they're feeling like. It's not good enough. I've dragged them into this, and now I've got to drag them out, if I can. But—but how can I do it?"

That was a troublesome question. Wally had thought that he would be able to dismiss the matter from his mind, but it refused to be dismissed. And after a few days of it the unhappy fag had come to the conclusion that it would be better to be expelled from the school than to continue as he was going on now. But the more he thought about it, the more of a tangle he seemed to be in. For it was not only his own falsehood that had to be considered now. He had caused others to speak falsely, and he could not make his own confession without the risk, at least, of betraying them.

Wally rose to his feet at last. He left the Third Form Room and made his way slowly to Study No. 6. He found his major there. Arthur Augustus was looking out of the study window. Blake, Herries, and Digby had gone over to tea with Riggins & Co. in the New House, but Arthur Augustus had not felt inclined to go with them. He looked round wearily as Wally came in.

"More trouble, Wally?" he asked.

"No; same old trouble."

"That's all ovah now, kid," said D'Arcy kindly. "It's settled. Nobody will evah find out now who woped up Mr. Selby."

"The trouble is, that it isn't all over," said Wally. "I—I wish you'd left me to chance it, Gussy, instead of saving me in the way you—you did."

"Wally!"

"I don't want to seem ungrateful, Gussy, but—but I feel as if I can't stand it any more," said Wally.

"I'm sorry, Wally. What's troubling you now?"

"Everything!" said Wally desperately. "It was old Selby's fault I lied to the Head; but—but I can't rest under it, Gussy. If—if it wasn't for dragging you fellows into it, after what you've done for me, I'd go straight to the Head and confess about it."

D'Arcy looked at his brother very seriously.

"Do you mean that, Wally?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Goodness knows I do!"

"Suppose we were willin' to do the same?"

"You couldn't—you couldn't own up to—"

"That would wipe it out," said D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, kid, it's the only relief I could get—to go and confess it all to the Head."

"But it would mean disgrace!"

"That's bettah than feelin' as I do about the mattah."

"You might get sacked as well as me."

"I shouldn't care, if I could only get this wotten worry off my mind."

Wally was silent for a minute.

"Does Tom Merry feel like that about it?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Has he said so?"

"Yaas."

"There's Manners and Lowther, too," said Wally. "They can't be given away. And—and if part of it comes out, Gussy, it will all come out. Once we start the Head on the track, he'll have the whole story out in a jiffy."

"I suppose so. But let's go and see the Shell chaps, and see what they say," Arthur Augustus suggested. "We could all go to the Head together, and own up."

"It's a rotten thing to go through."

"Bettah than feelin' like a wotten worm."

"That's how I look at it," said Wally. "But the others—"

"Let's go and see them."

The Terrible Three were having tea in their study when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his minor entered. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked at them grimly. It was not in human nature for them to feel very kindly towards Wally just then. He had brought upon them the blackest trouble of their experience. Other troubles they felt they could have faced with equanimity, but self-scorn is hardest of all to bear.

"Well, what do you want, young snuvers?" asked Lowther.

"Gussy will tell you."

"The fact is, deah boys—" D'Arcy hesitated, and then went on: "Wally's as sick of the present state of things as we are. If—if you fellows are willin', he wants to go to the Head and get it all ovah."

Tom Merry started. His face brightened up wonderfully.

"Honest Injun, Wally?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wally steadily. "I'd rather be sacked than go about feeling a rotten worm, and feeling that I've dragged you fellows into the same thing."

"I haven't persuaded him," said D'Arcy. "He came to me of his own accord to my study and said so. Didn't you, Wally?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry rose from his unfinished tea.

"If you mean that, I'll be jolly glad to go with you, for one," he said.

"And I think Manners and Lowther feel the same."

"Yes, rather," said Lowther.

"For goodness' sake let's make a clean breast of it," said Manners. "I don't care what the punishment is; let's get the matter open and above board, and we can face the rest."

"Yaas, wallah!"

"You've thought it out, Wally?" asked Tom Merry slowly.

The fag nodded.

"I've been thinking of nothing else for days," he said.

"You know what it means?"

"I shall be sacked, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I know that, and I'd rather have that than this!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Then let's go to the Head together and get it over," he said.

CHAPTER 15.

A Clean Breast of It!

"COME IN!" said Dr. Holmes. The Head glanced up as his study door opened, and an expression of surprise came over his face at the sight of five juniors—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther

of the Shell, D'Arcy of the Fourth, and D'Arcy minor of the Third.

"Come in, my boys," said the Head.

"What is it?"

The juniors came in, and then they hesitated.

It was not an easy thing they had come to say.

They looked at the Head, and looked at one another, and grew very red in the face; and Dr. Holmes' surprise increased every moment.

"What is it, my boys?" he asked. "I need not tell you that my time is—

ahem!—valuable. Can I do anything for you?"

"If—if you please, sir—"

"I—I did it, sir!" gasped Wally.

"You did what?"

"Roped up old Selby, sir—I—I mean, Mr. Selby!"

"You?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Holmes' brow grew quite terrific.

"You told me that you did not, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you deliberately deceived me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good heavens! And why have you come to tell me so?"

"Because—because I can't stand it any longer, sir!" gasped Wally.

"And—and we had seen him. But—but it was Mr. Selby we told, sir, not you."

The Head regarded the juniors with a very queer expression.

"Do you wish me to understand that you would not have spoken falsely to me, although you did to Mr. Selby?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," said the juniors at once.

"I do not see the distinction. A falsehood is a falsehood, whoever it is told to."

"It was different, sir. We know it was wrong. But—but you are straight, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean you are a—a sportsman."



Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus looked down over the banisters into the Hall below. There was a hubbub of voices, and they saw Mr. Selby being carried in. "What's Wally done to him?" D'Arcy murmured. As if in answer a voice roared up to them. "He's fainted!"

"Yaas, wafwah, sir; if you please, we—"

"We—we've—"

"Yes," said the Head.

"We've come to confess, sir," blurted out Tom Merry desperately.

The Head smiled.

"Indeed! You have been playing some prank, I suppose, and you have come to tell me about it. That is very right. What have you done?"

"It—it is worse than a prank, sir."

The Head's brow grew a little sterner.

"You have done something wrong?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had better tell me about it," said the Head quietly.

"You are surely not the kind of boys to have done anything very wrong, I think. I hope you exaggerate. But tell me what it is, and we will see."

"It—it's about Wally, sir—D'Arcy minor," stammered Tom Merry.

The Head's face softened somewhat.

"Ah! I am glad to see that your conscience has troubled you about it, at all events, D'Arcy minor. But what have these other boys to do with it? Surely they did not have a hand in such an outrage on a Form-master?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Wally hastily.

"Then what—"

"We knew Wally had done it, sir," said Tom Merry, in a low voice.

"Gussy—D'Arcy and I met him in the quad, after he had done it."

"But you told me you had not seen him there?"

Tom Merry hung his head.

"I—I didn't tell you so, sir. I—I told Mr. Selby. I—I know it was an untruth, but that was not quite so bad."

"And we told Mr. Selby we hadn't seen Wally outside the Third Form dorm that evening, sir," said Manners.

Wally said Tom Merry, seeking for words.

"You wouldn't doubt a chap's word. But—but Mr. Selby told us we were liars, and—and after that it didn't seem so bad to tell him lies. That's how it was, sir."

"I see," said the Head, very gravely.

"We don't make that an excuse, sir. We've come to confess to you, sir, because it worried us so much. But that was why it was, sir. So it was with Wally. Mr. Selby punished him for playing tricks in his room, when he hadn't done it, and wouldn't believe him when he said he hadn't done it. He said he was lying—"

"You are sure D'Arcy minor did not play those tricks in Mr. Selby's room?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because I played them myself, sir," said Tom Merry.

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"And we helped," said Manners and Lowther together.

"Oh!" said the Head.

"Mr. Selby accused Wally of lying, and thrashed him awfully, sir. Kildare interfered because he was going for him so much, and took the cane away."

"Indeed! I knew nothing whatever of this," said the Head gravely.

"It's only fair to tell you, sir, if you're going to expel Wally for what he did," said Tom Merry.

"Quite so; tell me everything!"

"Kildare will hear out what I said, sir. And—and after Wally roped up Mr. Selby, he—he was questioned, and then—"

"Then I remembered that old—that Mr. Selby called me a liar when I wasn't one," said Wally, "and I thought I might as well live up to it, sir. Only—only since, I—I've been thinking about it—"

"You have decided, I hope, that it is wrong to lie, whether your word has been doubted or not by the person concerned?"

"Yes, sir."

There was silence in the study. Dr. Holmes' brows were contracted, and his eyes dwelt upon the juniors with a peculiar searching expression.

"This is a very great shock to me," he said at last. "You especially, Merry, I have always regarded as the soul of honour. It is a very painful shock to me to find that you are capable of falsehood."

Tom Merry's face went crimson.

"You can't think any worse of me than I think myself, sir," he said miserably.

"And what was your object—to prevent D'Arcy minor from being punished, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Even after his outrageous conduct?"

"We didn't blame him for that, sir."

"You do not blame a boy for laying violent hands upon his Form-master?"

said the Head, raising his voice a little.

"No, sir, not in this case," said Tom Merry fearlessly. "Wally had been treated very badly—all the fellows know it. I told you, sir, that Kildare had to interfere, because Mr. Selby was treating him so brutally. Wally's still got the marks of the cane on his back, though it was four days ago."

"Yass, wathah!"

"Remove your jacket, D'Arcy minor!" said the Head, very quietly.

Wally hesitated.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir. But—but I don't want to sneak," said Wally. "If—if I had been going to complain to you I could have done that in the first place, and—and—"

"I am sorry you did not," said the Head. "Remove your jacket at once! I command you to do so! I am the best judge in this matter."

"Very well, sir," said Wally meekly.

The flag removed his jacket and unfastened his shirt. The Head looked at the marks, still showing red and angry upon the skin after the lapse of four days since the thrashing Wally had received at the hands of his Form-master.

Dr. Holmes' brow grew very dark.

"That will do, D'Arcy minor," he said in an altered voice.

Wally replaced his jacket.

"And now, my boys," said Dr.

Holmes, "D'Arcy minor's offence was a serious one, whatever provocation he may have received, and he knows how he will be dealt with. As for you, you others have done very wrong! I can make allowances for the fact that Mr. Selby provoked you by doubting your word in the first place, and also for a chivalrous desire to shield a boy to be severely punished. But you did wrong—very wrong! There is no possible excuse for uttering a falsehood. The fact that you have come to me to confess shows me that you realise this yourself."

"Yes, sir."

"Then you may go."

"Thank you, sir."

"I—I—I suppose I'd better go and pack my box, sir?" faltered Wally.

"I shall consider your case, D'Arcy minor. There are evidently circumstances in the matter that I had not heard of before. I shall weigh the matter very carefully, and shall consider what is best to be done. You may go now."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

The juniors left the study. Their hearts were lighter now, and their faces

were brighter. And Wally seemed to be walking on air.

"I'm not going to be sacked," he said, with conviction. "Now the Head knows what a beast Selby was, he won't sack me. He's a good old sort. He wouldn't raise my hopes if he meant to sack me, after all, at the finish."

"It will be a flogging, at least, then," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, blow the flogging!" said Wally. "It won't be any worse than what I've had from Selby. I can stand lickings! I don't care!"

"The Head's a bwick!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a deep breath. "Bai Jove! I feel bettah now that I've got that off my chest, you fellows!"

"We've had a lesson," said Tom Merry soberly, "and I don't think any of us will be likely to make the same mistake again."

"Wathah not!"

Wally was right; he was not sacked. Dr. Holmes had an interview the same evening with Mr. Selby and Kildare. Kildare did not conceal anything when he was questioned, and Mr. Selby had a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour with the Head.

Dr. Holmes spoke with such exceeding plainness that when the Third Form master left the study he was quite pale. And, although his affection for D'Arcy minor was probably not increased by that painful experience, Mr. Selby showed himself more careful after that in his treatment of the scamp of the Third.

Wally was flogged for what he had done, as he certainly deserved; but the flogging did not trouble him very much—it was the "sack" he had dreaded.

Open confession, it is said, is good for the soul; and certainly the chums of the School House felt better now that it was over, and they could hold up their heads again.

They had faced dishonour, but the lesson was not likely to be lost upon any of them.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "THE CONVICT—HUNTERS!"—a great yarn telling of the exciting search for a dangerous convict—starring Tom Merry & Co. Order your GEM early.)



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Leslie M. Brown, 289, Martin Way, Merton Park, London, S.W.20; age 14-16; aircraft.

Miss Cynthia Alexander, 7, Lower Elfton Road, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies; girl correspondents; British Empire, France, U.S.A.

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A. Doyle, Jun., 4, Patricia Villas, Tottenham, London, N.17; age 15-17; overseas; cycling, travelling.

Sam Battley, 3, Southfield Terrace, Birkenhead, near Bradford, Yorks. England, U.S.A.; swimming, dance music.

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R. A. Walker, 46, Boyne Road, Lewisham, London, S.E.13; age 14-18; radio and electricity.

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John Harris, 67, Chrip Street, Poplar, London, E.14; age 14-16; cycling, cycle gadgets.

ANOTHER GRAND YARN OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD.



The light in Mr. Dalton's hand concentrated on a wriggling, mumbling figure on the floor. Instead of the prisoner, he saw that it was a member of his own Form. "Wha-a-t—" stuttered Mr. Dalton. "It—it—it is Lovell!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Lovell, of Course!

"SILVER!"
"Yes, Bulkeley!"
"Head's study," said the captain of Rookwood. "You, and the other three young sweeps." Prep should have been going on in the Fourth. Instead of which, nearly every fellow in that Form was out in the passage, or standing in a study doorway—and all were talking. That evening at Rookwood School had been eventful—in fact, wildly exciting. The juniors were discussing it breathlessly when Bulkeley of the Sixth called up the stair to Jimmy Silver & Co.

"We're for it!" groaned Jimmy.
"Rot!" said Lovell. "The Head simply can't—"

"Looks as if he's going to, whether he can or not," remarked Raby.

"I tell you he can't—"
"Oh, come on!" said Newcome.

"Let's get it over."
"But he can't—" persisted Arthur Edward Lovell, addressing the backs of his comrades' heads as they went down the stairs.

The Classical Fourth passage was left in a buzz behind the Fistical Four as they went. Three members of the Co. looked very serious—but Arthur Edward Lovell was confident.

"You'll see," he said, as they approached Dr. Chisholm's study door.

"I tell you he simply can't—"
"You'd better tell the Head that," suggested Jimmy. "He may not know that he can't!"

Whereat Raby and Newcome grinned, and Lovell snorted. Jimmy Silver tapped at the headmaster's door, and they entered.

They were rather glad to see their Form-master, Mr. Richard Dalton, with

the Big Beak, Dicky Dalton, they hoped, would put in a word for them if the Big Beak proved waxy!

Dr. Chisholm did not look "waxy." But he looked very severe as he fixed his eyes on the four.

"Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome! You four boys were out of school bounds after lock-up!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.
"May I point out, sir—" began Lovell.

"You may be silent, Lovell!"
"Yes, sir; but—"

Arthur Edward Lovell is the man for wonderful wheezes—at least, that's his own opinion. But like so many of his stunts, his latest one only succeeds in landing Arthur Edward well and truly in the soup!

"He silent, Lovell!" rapped Mr. Dalton.

Lovell suppressed his feelings—and his remarks. Silence was not Arthur Edward's long suit.

"This is a serious matter," said the Head. "What explanation have you to offer, Silver?"

"It was only a lark, sir," murmured Jimmy. "We—we went down to the Roke to slide—that was all, sir."

The Head looked at him very searchingly.

"A very foolish and thoughtless proceeding, if true," he added dryly.

"It's true, sir."

Jimmy might have added that they had done that foolish and thoughtless thing because some Modern chaps, who had done it, had dared them to do likewise. But he could not give away Tommy Dook & Co.; neither, probably, would the Head have comprehended that the end study could not possibly refuse a challenge!

"Do you accept this statement, Mr. Dalton?" asked the Head.

"Certainly, sir!" answered Richard Dalton. "I am assured that these boys of my Form have only acted thoughtlessly."

"And if we hadn't—" recommenced Lovell.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Raby.

"If we hadn't," went on Lovell, unheeding, "we shouldn't have been at Masters' gate when you got there, sir, coming back from Coombe. We shouldn't have been able to barge in when that footpad went for you—"

"Barge in!" repeated the Head. "Went for me! Mr. Dalton, do these boys learn English in your Form-room?"

"Heh! Certainly, sir!"

"It is very singular, then, that they cannot address their headmaster in that language!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"I mean, we took a hand when that footpad went—I mean when he biffed you," stammered Lovell. "That boogian was after your notecase, sir, and you'd have been robbed if we hadn't barged—I mean butted—that is, if we hadn't interfered—"

Under the steady icy stare of the headmaster, even Arthur Edward Lovell trailed off into silence.

"I think I understand your meaning, Lovell, couched as your remarks are in inelegant slangy phrases," said Dr.

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Chisholm. "If you allowed me to speak—"

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

"I should have expressed my recognition of your act in intervening when I was attacked by that ruffianly person. That, however, does not alter the fact that you were out of school bounds at the time, when you should have been in your study at preparation. Neither, as a matter of fact, did you prevent me from being robbed, as the man did actually deprive me of my notecase!"

"But the man's been caught, sir," said Lovell. "He was cornered in Mr. Manders' room over on the Modern side, and they got him! I—I thought he was locked up in a room here waiting for a bobby!"

"A what?"

"I—I mean a peeler!"

"You mean a peeler?" repeated the Head.

"A—a policeman, sir?"

"Oh!" said Dr. Chisholm. "I am glad to be able to elucidate your meaning at last, Lovell! It is true that the man was caught, and is now awaiting the arrival of a constable from Latham to take him into custody. But my notecase has not been recovered, and as the man declares that he dropped it in his flight, it may never be recovered."

"Oh!" said Lovell. "But all the same, sir, I think, and I'm bound to say—Whoooooow!" Lovell yelled, as his foot was stamped on.

"Bless my soul! What—"

"Ow! Jimmy, you ass—wow!" gasped Lovell. "What I meant to say was, sir—"

"Did you stamp on Lovell's foot, Silver?"

"I—I thought he was talking too much, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

Something like the ghost of a smile glided over the severe face of the headmaster of Rookwood.

"I was going to say—" gasped Lovell.

"Be silent, please."

"But I think I've a right to point out, sir—"

"Mr. Dalton, can you induce this boy of your Form to be silent, since he does not appear amenable to his headmaster's authority?" said Dr. Chisholm.

Mr. Dalton, colouring with vexation, gave Lovell a look—which would have reduced any other fellow at Rookwood to the solemn silence of a stone image. But it did not appear to have much effect on Lovell.

Lovell's view was that the assistance the Fistical Four had rendered when Dr. Chisholm was struggling in the grasp of Slog Poggers, entitled them to be let off for having been out of bounds at the time. Lovell thought this a reasonable view. As the Head did not seem to see it, Lovell was the man to make it clear to him.

"I only wanted to point out, sir, that considering that we weighed in to help you, when that blighter snuffed you just inside the gate, and that you'd never have known we were out of bounds if we hadn't—"

Mr. Dalton took Lovell by the back of the collar. That iron grip silenced even Arthur Edward Lovell. He wriggled indignantly.

"Now," said the Head, with grim sarcasm, "if I am permitted to speak I will conclude my remarks. I was going to say, that in view of your action in coming to my assistance, I should request your Form-master to excuse you for having broken school bounds, if he was satisfied that it was

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nothing worse than a thoughtless frolic."

Four faces brightened.

"But—" went on the Head in a deep voice.

Four faces clouded.

"But what I should have done on my own volition, I certainly shall not do when it is claimed as a right, which it certainly is not. Mr. Dalton, you will punish these juniors for their infraction of the rules of the school."

"Certainly, sir!"

"In the circumstances, I am unwilling that they should be camed. But detention on a half-holiday—"

"Quite, sir!"

"Very good! They may go!"

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome, with feelings too deep for words, if it had been the time and place to utter any, went to the door. Lovell gasped.

"Well," he began, "I jolly well think that—"

What Arthur Edward Lovell jolly well thought never transpired; for Mr. Dalton, with a jerk of his sinewy arm, hooked him out of the study by the collar. Lovell's remarks ended in a gurgle, and the closing door shut that gurgle off from the majestic ears of the Head.

The Boy Who Knew How!

"TRUST Lovell!" said Raby bitterly.

The fellows were in their studies at last, and more or less attention—generally less—was being given to prep. There was not much time left for prep after the exciting events of that evening—a man-hunt in the quadrangle after a footpad who had got away with the Head's wallet. Over in Manders' House the fellows were as excited as on the Classical side—or more so, for it was in Roger Manders' own room that the hunted rascal had been run down and collared. Now he was locked up in a room in the Head's house, and most fellows hoped that the constable would not arrive from Latham to take him away before prep was over. Naturally, they wanted to see the last act of the play, as Mornington described it.

Not much in the way of prep, it is true, was getting done. But fellows could not go down from the studies till the appointed time.

One fellow in the Classical Fourth, however, disregarded that rule. That one was Lovell.

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were in the end study, getting something done. Lovell had not come up with them after leaving the Head.

Perhaps he guessed that his comrades intended to boot him when they got him to the privacy of the end study. Or perhaps he had some other reason. Anyhow, he hadn't come up.

"Oh, trust him!" assented Newcome, nodding agreement with Raby's remark.

"He's the jolly old limit!" sighed Jimmy Silver. "If he'd only held his tongue in the Head's study—"

"Does he ever hold his tongue?" asked Raby.

"Well, we're going to boot him," said Jimmy. "That will be a comfort."

"The ass!" said Raby.

"The fathead!" said Newcome.

"The frabjous chump!" agreed Jimmy.

Anyone overhearing the remarks in the end study would never have guessed that the three fellows there were Lovell's loyal chums.

They were intensely exasperated with Arthur Edward. Clearly, they would have been let off with a "jaw"—if only

Lovell hadn't put the Head's back up. Lovell could always be trusted to put his foot in it!

The study door opened suddenly, and Lovell came in. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome rose to their feet, with grim looks.

Lovell did not seem to notice that. The expression on his face was keen and eager. Evidently he had something to impart.

He was not given time to impart it, whatever it was. Having shut the study door, he turned to his chums—to find himself in the grip of three pairs of vengeful hands.

"Here, what—" ejaculated Lovell. "Yaroooooh!"

Clump, clump, clump! Whirled round in the grasp of his loyal chums, he was smitten by three boots, which sent him staggering back to the door. The three thudded together, and thudded hard. It was a case of three soles with but a single thought, as the poet very nearly said.

Lovell caught at the door, steadied himself, and glared round in almost speechless wrath at the Co.

"Wharrer you up to?" he roared.

"Booting a silly fathead!" explained Jimmy Silver.

"You—you—you!" gasped Lovell. "You silly owls! You crass asses! I've a jolly good mind not to tell you my wonderful wheeze now for getting off detention! Ow!"

"You've got a wheeze, have you?" snorted Newcome.

"Ow! Yes, you silly fathead! Ow!"

"Take it away and boil it!"

"Look here!" roared Lovell.

"Br-r-r-r!"

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome sat down to prep again. Lovell stood wriggling, and glaring at them in great wrath.

"I've a jolly good mind—" began Lovell.

"Why don't you use it sometimes, then?" demanded Raby.

"I've a jolly good mind—" roared Lovell.

"A jolly bad one, to judge by the way it works!" said Newcome.

"Will you let a fellow speak?" shrieked Lovell. "I've a jolly good mind not to let you in this stunt—"

"You've let us in for a detention, anyhow!" said Jimmy. "What about shutting up, and doing some prep?"

"Blow prep! Look here! Do you fellows want to be detained on Saturday afternoon?" hooted Lovell. "I tell you, I know how to get off. If you'll listen to a chap—"

"Seems to me we never do anything else," sighed Jimmy. "But get on. Cut it as short as you can!"

"You heard what the Head said in his study?" Lovell commenced.

"He said he would have let us off, if you hadn't barged in and put his back up."

"I don't mean that. He said that that sneak-thief who had bagged his notecase chucked it away while he was dodging about the quad with a crowd of fellows on his track. It wasn't found on him when Dicky Dalton and the prefects brought him over here from Manders' House."

"Well?"

"Well, suppose we found it for the Head? He's jolly ungrateful, telling Dalton to detain us after we helped him as we did. But if we got that wallet back for him, he would be bound to play up. Even headmasters are human."

"Are they?" asked Newcome, as if he doubted it.

"Well, more or less," said Lovell. "I



As Arthur Edward stepped towards the pickpocket he imagined that the man's hands were tied behind him. But that was where he made a mistake. Mr. Poggers' hands suddenly whipped from behind him and grasped Lovell in a grip like a steel vice. "Oh!" gasped Lovell. "Gotcher!" exclaimed Mr. Poggers.

believe there was a lot of money in that wallet—the man followed the Head here, you know, because he saw him open it at the post office in Coombe. May be pounds and pounds. Suppose we got it back for the Head—well, it stands to reason that he would let us off—it would be only decent."

"Are you proposing a search of the quad, and Little Quad, and both Houses before dawn?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Think we could get over the ground in an hour or so—especially in the dark?" "No, I'm not!" snapped Lovell. "I'm proposing asking that thief where he clucked it."

"What?" "That's what I've been up to while you fellows have been wasting time on prep!" said Lovell scornfully. "I've been scouting—and spotting—where they've put the brute. He's locked up in the punishment-room. I suppose they thought that the safest place to put him till the bobby comes over from Latcham."

"Safe as houses," said Jimmy. "But what?"

"Dalton's left the key in the lock, on the outside," said Lovell. "I've spotted that. Of course, it hasn't occurred to him that any Rookwood chap would cut in to see the man—especially as it's prep now."

"No," gasped Jimmy, "I suppose it hasn't! I suppose it wouldn't! And I jolly well know that he's right, too! Nobody's going to!"

"Do listen to a fellow! We go there and ask the brute where he was when he clucked away that note-case, and then we go to the spot, pick it up, and take it to the Head, and there you are!"

"You think he'll tell us?" asked Newcome sarcastically. "You think he'll feel so kind and obliging towards us because we helped to snaffle him?"

"I think he'll tell us, if we collar him and bang his head on the floor till he does!" retorted Lovell.

"Oh crikey!"

"We're justified in handling the brute to get back what he pinched from the Head," said Lovell. "I'll bang his head hard enough, I can tell you."

"You think he'll let you?" inquired Raby.

"If you'd listen, instead of jawing, I'd tell you that Bulkeley tied his hands behind him with a duster before he was locked up in clink. He's a hefty brute, but he can't argue a lot with his paws tied."

"And suppose we're spotted?" gasped Jimmy.

"There's nobody anywhere near clink. We can turn off the light in the passage, too. The bobby can't get here under half an hour, at least. Everybody's at prep. What about it?"

Lovell's chin quivered at him. Arthur Edward Lovell was the man for hare-brained stunts. But this, to his faithful comrades, seemed the limit.

"You unspeakable idiot!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "If we were caught barging in, it would mean a flogging all round. And serve us jolly well right, too."

"Nuff said!" snapped Lovell. "I want you fellows to back me up. Are you going to back me up, or not?"

"Not!" answered three voices in unison.

"Then I'll handle it alone!" said Lovell determinedly. "It's as easy as falling off a form! The Head's bound to let us off detention if we get his note-case back. We can make that brute tell us where he dropped it, and get out with a flash-lamp and pick it up. Easy as winking."

"If you've done your funny turn, old man, sit down and do some prep," suggested Raby.

"Are you coming?" demanded Lovell.

"No!" yelled the three.

"Then I'll go and do it alone."

"You won't!"

Lovell dragged open the study door. Three fellows leaped up from the table and rushed at him.

He slammed the door and went. Pattering footsteps died away down the passage to the stairs.

Jimmy Silver jerked the door open in turn. The three juniors ran out into the passage—catching a last glimpse of Lovell disappearing down the staircase. "Oh, the ass!" breathed Jimmy. "Get after him! If he's going to try it on, we've got to see that he comes to no harm—if we can."

And the three juniors raced down the passage after Lovell. They scuttled down the stairs.

But their luck was out. As they reached the foot of the staircase, Mr. Dalton came out of his study, with Mr. Mauders, the Modern master. Richard Dalton's eye was on them at once. Lovell had already vanished, but Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were in full view of their Form-master.

"What are you doing out of your study in preparation?" rapped Mr. Dalton.

The three made no answer. They could not explain to Richard Dalton that they were in pursuit of an unthinking ass who was hunting for trouble.

"Go back to your study at once!" said Mr. Dalton severely.

There was no help for it. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome trailed up the staircase again.

They went back to the end study—but not to prep. They were too worried about Lovell to think of prep. They wondered dizzily what Lovell was doing, and what sort of a bungle he was going to make of his latest stunt. But their very worst anticipations fell far short of the awful truth.

An Exchange of Prisoners!

SLOG POGGERS moved about the punishment-room of Rookwood School—commonly called "clink"—by the juniors—a good deal like a tiger in a cage.

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The light had been left burning for him, but the light only showed him that there was no possible means of escape.

The door, of heavy oak, was locked on the outside. The window, small and deep in the thick wall, was protected by iron bars.

Left alone there, the pickpocket had soon ascertained the fact that he could do nothing but wait for the constable to arrive. The duster that Bulkeley had knotted round his sinewy wrists had not bothered him long.

But it booted not, as a novelist would say. At liberty to try door and window with free hands, it was only to make the discovery that there was no possible escape by either.

Slog's luck had let him down cruelly. Having actually "pinched" a notecase, wadded with notes, from the old "bloke" who had turned out to be headmaster of this school, he had had no chance of getting away with it. Hunted high and low all over Rookwood, he had been run down in Mr. Manders' room, over in Manders' House—and here he was!

He had one consolation—they hadn't got the wallet back! Hidden in the lining of the thick grey overcoat hanging up in Mr. Manders' room, Slog hoped that it would remain there, unseen and unsuspected—till he came out of the "stone jug" and was free to watch for the gentleman wearing that overcoat outside the school.

For which reason he had "confessed" that he had thrown the wallet away in his flight, and no doubt next day it would be hunted for far and wide. Mr. Poggers did not care where it was hunted for, so long as nobody thought of looking inside the lining of Mr. Manders' overcoat!

Caged in "clink" and in the worst of tempers, Slog Poggers moved about restlessly. There was no escape—but he still nourished a faint hope of making a rush for it when the door was opened. They would expect to find him with his hands tied, as he had been left, and he would very quickly demonstrate that his hands weren't. A lucky punch, taking the "copper" by surprise, might give him a chance—

The sound of the key grating in the door caused Mr. Poggers to stop his tiger-like rambling. Breathing hard, he faced the door, his hands behind him, as if they were still tied.

The door opened. To Slog's utter amazement, it was the head of a schoolboy, not the helmeted head of a constable, that was inserted. Almost spellbound, he stared at Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell gave him a look, stepped in, and quickly closed the door. Slog still stared. It came into his mind that some schoolboy, curious to see the prisoner, had come to give him a look-in, believing, of course, that he was tired and helpless. In his wildest dreams, Slog could never have dreamed of a stroke of luck like this.

"Keep where you are, my man!" said Lovell, his back to the door. "You can't do much harm with your hands tied—but if you try any tricks, I'll knock you spinning as soon as look at you!"

"Will you?" said Mr. Poggers, blinking at him.

"Yes, I jolly well will, and that's a tip!" said Lovell cheerfully. "Now listen to me! I've come here to ask you a question."

Slog listened. But he was listening less to Lovell than for sounds in the passage without. Had this schoolboy

come there alone—was there nobody in the passage?

"You've told the Head that you threw his notecase away when we were all after you," went on Lovell. "I want to know where you threw it."

Slog only eyed him—still listening for sounds from without. No such sound came to his ears.

"Ain't the copper come yet, sir?" asked Slog.

"Not yet, or I shouldn't be here," grinned Lovell. "He may be half an hour yet—it's a good step from Latcham. Now, just where were you, my man, when you pitched the notecase away?"

"I don't rightly remember, sir," said Slog, eyeing him.

"Wash that out!" said Lovell. "You're not talking to a fool!"

"Ain't I, sir?" said Slog. He had a strong impression that he was—judging by Lovell's present proceedings.

"Cough it up, and don't waste time!" said Lovell. "I'm not standing on ceremony with you. You'll tell me, or I'll make you!"

"Ow'll you make me, sir?" asked Slog. He was really curious on that point.

"You see that table?" asked Lovell. "Well, I'm going to bang your head on it till you tell me where you dropped the Head's wallet!"

"Blow me pink and blue!" ejaculated Mr. Poggers.

"I mean it!" said Lovell briskly. "Now, you may as well cough it up before I bang your head—see?"

"I desay somebody'd come in and stop you fast enough!" said Slog.

"That's where you're wrong!" grinned Lovell. "Nobody knows I've come here, and won't know till I've got that notecase. There isn't anybody within hearing if you yell your loudest, so you can cut that out, my pippin!"

It did not occur to the astute Arthur Edward that Slog was pumping him, and that he was telling the man exactly what he wanted to know!

Slog's little piggy eyes glittered. Fortune, it was clear, was favouring him after his run of ill-luck.

"Now, how about it?" rapped Lovell. He advanced a step. "I don't want to have to handle you, but you're going to tell me where to pick up that notecase, if I have to crack your nut! Get it out!"

"You better get on with the nut-cracking, sir!" said Slog. "I ain't going to tell you nothing!"

"Mind, I mean it," said Lovell, "and here goes for a sample!"

He stepped towards the pickpocket and grasped him by the shoulders. His intention was to give Slog's bullet head a rap on the table, as a tip that he had better speak, and speak without delay.

Had Slog's hands still been tied behind him, as Lovell did not doubt they were, no doubt Arthur Edward's programme might have been carried out. As it was, however, those hands suddenly whipped from behind Mr. Poggers, and closed on Arthur Edward with a grip like a steel vice.

"Oh!" gasped Lovell, quite taken by surprise.

"Catcher!" grinned Mr. Poggers.

"Oh! Ow! Oh!" spluttered Lovell as he whirled helplessly in that powerful grip.

"Old your row!" snarled Slog. He knew, from Lovell, that no one was within hearing, but he was taking no risks.

Lovell thudded on the floor, resisting desperately. Slog grabbed the handkerchief from his pocket. Utterly helpless

in the hands of the ruffian—those hands that were so unexpectedly free—Lovell struggled, and would have shouted for help. But he had no chance. Slog Poggers planted a sinewy knee on him, pinning him down, grasped his chin, opened his mouth by main force, and jammed the crumpled handkerchief therein.

"Gurrghh!" gurgled Lovell. That was the limit of what Arthur Edward could utter.

Grinning, Mr. Poggers jammed the handkerchief well in. Then he drew Lovell's wrists together, and bound them fast with the duster that had been used on his own—binding them to a leg of the table.

Lovell, sprawling on the floor, breathing hard through his nose, half-choked by the gag, glared up at him.

Slog gave him a grin.

"Bang my 'ead, will you?" he said. "Not this time, I think, sir! No! Why, I'd crack your nut for you on them planks if I didn't feel so obliged to you for coming 'ere and letting a bloke loose!" Slog chuckled. "You're a clever young gentleman, you are, sir, and I desay your 'eadmaster will think so when he comes 'ere with the copper, and finds you instead of me! I'll say good-evening now, sir, if you don't object to a covey goin' in a 'urry!"

Lovell could not speak; but, anyhow, his feelings would have been too deep for words. Slog Poggers shut off the light and opened the door. The man stood there listening for a few seconds. There was no sound of alarm. Lovell heard the man's suppressed breathing in the dark. He heard him jerk the electric lamp from its socket and throw it into a corner of the room, where it smashed. The light could not be turned on now if anyone looked in.

Then Lovell heard the door close and the key turn in the lock. He heard the key withdrawn. Obviously, Slog, if he got clear, wanted his escape to be discovered as late as possible, to give him a chance of placing a safe distance between himself and Rookwood.

Lovell heard another crack from the passage, and guessed that the passage lamp had been sacrificed to Slog's safety.

After that he heard no more. The prisoner was gone.

Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth was left a prisoner in his place. He was left there, to be found when the constable came.

In a state of utter desperation he wriggled in his bonds and chewed frantically at his gag. It was unnerving to think of Dr. Chisholm finding him there and the pickpocket gone; but he would have brought the Head and all Rookwood there if it had been possible!

But it wasn't!

Lovell had been secured with very great care by the wily Mr. Poggers. He could not get loose; he could only wriggle desperately; he could utter no sound but a faint gurgle. He had to wait till they came for Slog, with the happy knowledge, in the meantime, that the pickpocket was making his escape, and that he, Arthur Edward Lovell, was wholly and solely responsible for the same!

Only Lovell!

TUBBY MUFFIN put a fat, excited face into the end study. "He's come!" squealed Tubby.

It was unnecessary to state who "he" was. "He," of course, was the expected constable from Latcham.

Prep was over in the Classical Fourth. Fellows were crowding out of the

studios, all keen to see the pickpocket led away, like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrists. But Jimmy Silver & Co. were thinking more about Arthur Edward Lovell than the pickpocket.

It was nearly half an hour since Lovell had left them. They had hoped that he would come back. He hadn't come back.

Had he screwed the required information out of the prisoner, and was he, in these moments, rooting about in the dark quad with a flash-lamp for the lost notecase—incidentally breaking Hansa bonds?

Or—as seemed more probable to fellows who knew Lovell—had he bungled somehow; or was he still hanging about watching for a chance to get at the man in the punishment-room?

Lovell's pals could only wonder, with deep discomfiture.

"Goodness only knows what's happened!" said Jimmy Silver. "But ten to one, of course, Lovell never got anywhere near clink. He's the kind of obstinate ass to hang on, watching for a chance, instead of coming back like a sensible fellow. Thank goodness that bobby's come; it will put a stop to Lovell playing the goat, anyhow! Let's go down!"

They followed the crowd of the Classical Fourth downstairs.

The whole House seemed to have gathered at the news of the prisoner's arrival. Modern fellows, over in Manders' House, had no chance of seeing what was to be seen; but all the Head's House, the Classical side, had swarmed out of the studios. Jimmy Silver had a glimpse of a horly man in a helmet led away by Mr. Dalton and the Head.

Every fellow who wished—and all wished—was free to follow on as far as the corridor that led to the punishment-room. Into that corridor, however, they were not allowed to crowd; and Bulkeley of the Sixth and a couple of other prefects stood there to see that they did not.

Barred off by the prefects, the swarming crowd watched the policeman, the Head, and the Fourth Form master walk down the corridor.

To their surprise it was unlighted. Generally, of course, that unlit corridor was unlighted, but on the present occasion the light had been left on by Mr. Dalton after locking the pickpocket in "clink." Mr. Dalton was seen to grope for the switch. But the light did not come on.

"Please put on the light, Mr. Dalton!" The Head's voice was heard, with a note of asperity in it.

"Something appears to be wrong with it, sir," answered Mr. Dalton quietly. "The switch is turned down. Possibly the lamp is defective. I will ascertain."

Jimmy, Baby, and Newcome, in the forefront of the swarm at the passage-end, exchanged eloquent glances. Had Lovell closed the gim, and was he, at that very moment, cornered at the dark end of the passage?

"The lamp is gone, sir!" came Mr. Dalton's voice from the shadows. "Someone has removed the lamp."

"Upon my word!" said Dr. Chisholm. "Bulkeley, please obtain another lamp—fetch the nearest!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Bulkeley pushed through the crowd. He took the nearest electric bulb from its socket, and took it back to Mr. Dalton. The Fourth Form master inserted it into the lamp-socket in the passage, and the light came on at once.

"Somebody's been larkin' here!" murmured Mornington.

"What silly ass—" said Smythe of the Shell.

"The Head looks waxy!" grinned Tubby Muffin.

There was no need for Cecil Adolphus Reginald Muffin to point that out. Dr. Chisholm's face was very grim. A "lark" with the passage light was particularly inappropriate at such a time. The Latham constable was heard to grunt. However, illumination being restored, he trod ponderously on with the headmaster and the Fourth Form master to the door of the punishment-room, which faced the corridor at the end.

"The man is here, constable," said Dr. Chisholm. "He was locked in this room for security to await your arrival. Please enter and take him into custody."

"P'raps you'll unlock the door, sir?"

"Kindly unlock the door, Mr. Dalton. You have the key?"

"The key was left in the outside of the lock, sir," said Richard Dalton, quite puzzled. "It was left in readiness."

"You do not mean to say that it is not still there, Mr. Dalton?"

"It has been taken away, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"What larks!" breathed Morny.

Some of the mob at the passage-end chuckled. It looked, to them, as if some mischievous fellow had been "larking." Jimmy, Baby, and Newcome looked at one another. Lovell was not to be seen in the corridor when the light came out—that was a relief. But they could hardly doubt that it was Lovell who had bagged the key. What had he done with it—and where was he?

"The awful ass!" breathed Jimmy.

"The giddy blit!" groaned Baby.

"There'll be a fearful row about this!"

"I—I say he may be in there, talking to the man now. What will the Head say?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Newcome.

"Now so bad as that!" breathed Jimmy. "The door's locked—Lovell wouldn't lock it on the inside. Even Lovell isn't such an idiot as that! I suppose he bagged it and was interrupted—"

"Keep it dark for goodness' sake!"

"Yes, rather!"

There was a long pause at the other end of the corridor. The Latham constable had a very expressive expression on his face. The headmaster was almost pale with anger. Dicky Dalton red with vexation. It was an utterly unexpected obstacle in the way of getting the captured pickpocket handed over to the police, and getting rid of him.

"Have you any idea where the key may be, Mr. Dalton?" asked the Head at last.

"None, sir! Some foolish boy, I presume—"

"Sergeant Kettle has a key to this room," said Dr. Chisholm. "Send—"

"Bulkeley! Please fetch Sergeant Kettle here, and ask him to bring his key to the punishment-room."

"Very well, sir."

There was a long wait this time. At one end of the corridor the Head and Mr. Dalton and the constable stood—the officer's ruddy face growing more and more expressive. At the other end half-Rookwood swarmed, craning over one another's shoulders to watch.

Sergeant Kettle arrived at last. He came up the corridor with his military step, and inserted a key in the lock.

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At long last the door of the punishment-room was thrown open.

All was dark within.

"Plugs switch on the light, Mr. Dalton!" came the Head's voice, quite soon now. "Really, Mr. Dalton—"

Dick Dalton's hand was already on the switch inside the door. But the light did not come on in "Oh!"

"The man must have damaged the lamp, sir; the light will not come on," said Mr. Dalton. "Be off your guard, constable; this may mean some attempt—"

"I understood that the man's hands were secured," Mr. Dalton!

"That is the case, sir; but possibly—"

"What is that sound?" ejaculated the Head, starting.

From the black interior of the punishment-room came a low, hoarse growling sound. It was like the sound of some suffocated fellow trying to speak.

"Has the man fallen in a fit?" asked the startled Head.

"It certainly sounds—"

Gurgles!

Bulkeley, get a flash-light, as quickly as possible. It would be injudicious for the constable to enter in the dark!" said Dr. Chisholm.

The Latham man gave him a look. The indifference of such a proceeding had already contrived to the constable! So far from intending to enter the room, in the dark, the officer was taking out his truncheon, in readiness for an attempted rush from the prisoner within.

The crowd, watching along the corridor, hardly breathed now with anticipation, as the constable was seen to grip his truncheon with a business-like air. They were in deep and thrilling anticipation of a struggle and a bloody.

But no one appeared from the darkness of the room—no sound was heard but that low, moaning gurgle, repeated several times.

Whether the man was, indeed, in a sort of a fit, or whether he was playing some cunning trick, hoping to get a chance in the dark, it was impossible to tell.

But everyone was very much on his guard. Mr. Dalton diffidently placed himself in advance of the headmaster in case a desperate rush came. The constable held his truncheon half-raised. Sergeant Kettle prepared for active service. Thus they waited—till Bulkeley of the Sixth came back at last with an electric torch in his hand.

He would have entered the punishment-room with it, but Mr. Dalton took it from his hand. This was the post of danger!

"You will be on your guard, constable! The man is a muscular ruffian, and I think, desperate—"

"I'm ready for him, sir, if you show a light," answered the officer solemnly.

Holding up the electric torch, and guarding with his left, Richard Dalton stepped slowly into the dark room. The constable trumped nervily after him, truncheon in grip. Sergeant Kettle and Bulkeley brought up the rear. The most desperate rush would hardly have got through them. But no such came.

Mr. Dalton flashed the light round. For the moment nobody was to be seen. The Head's voice came acidly from the passage:

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"The man is there, I presume, Mr. Dalton!"

"He must be here, sir—the door was locked—Oh! Ah! What—"

The light in Mr. Dalton's hand concentrated on a writhing, unthinking, grunting figure on the floor. For a second he supposed that it was the prisoner—in a fit or something of the kind.

The next second he saw that it was a member of his own Form, with a gag in his mouth and with his hands tied to a leg of the table!

"What?" stammered Mr. Dalton, gazing spellbound at the prisoner of the punishment-room. "What—"

"Darrog!" came from the spreading figure.

The constable stared at Lovell.

"That ain't the man, I 'rove, sir!" he cried.

"Oh! Oh! No! Certainly not!"

"Then where is he?"

Dr. Chisholm looked in at the doorway, angrily and impatiently. The light, wavering in Richard Dalton's startled hand, gleamed on the face of Arthur Edward Lovell. Dr. Chisholm gazed at him like a man in a dream.

"That—that—that is a Rockywood boy!" he articulated.

"It—it—it is Lowell of the Form," stammered Mr. Dalton.

Bulkeley stooped in silence, removed the choking gag from Lovell's mouth and untied the duster. There was an awful silence during this proceeding. With a helping hand from the Rockywood captain, Arthur Edward Lovell staggered to his feet.

"Lovell!"

The Head's voice was not loud, but deep.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" growled Lovell.

"What are you doing here?"

"I—I came—"

"Where is the man whose feet looked in the room?"

"I—I think he's gone, sir!"

It was only too clear that the man was gone!

"Mrs. Dalton, take that boy away! I will deal with him later! Constable, I am sorry—"

Mr. Dalton led Lovell out of the punishment-room by the shoulder.

There was a gasp and a yell from the watching crowd at the other end, as they saw that member of the Classical Fourth emerge.

"Lovell!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Lovell!" squeaked Tubby Stalls.

"Great gig!"

Holy smoke!

Lovell could not speak. Even Lovell, for the moment at least, was deserted by his usual self-satisfaction; and he felt, as he looked the better eye over!

"Lovell!" said Mr. Dalton, quietly, "your incredibly foolish meddling has caused the escape of a law-breaker! Go to your dormitory, and remain there! You will probably be punished for this! Go!"

In silence Arthur Edward Lovell went. His faithful classmate gathered round him and went with him, also in silence. There was nothing for any fellow to say. The culprit was too awful for words. Lovell's wonderful stunt for getting Jimmy Silver & Co. off detention was likely to prove disastrous for Arthur Edward.

What will happen to poor old Lovell? Look out for the next grand Rockywood yarn! "THE BOY WHO BROKE BOUNDS!" Read your GEM early.

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